CONTAINERS FOR THE LIVING AND THE SHADES

VESSELS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

JACARANDA

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ART AND ANTIQUES FROM AFRICA, OCEANIA AND THE AMERICAS

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© 2022, Jacaranda LLC
Published January, 2022

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CONTAINERS FOR THE LIVING AND THE SHADES

VESSELS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

We are pleased to present our first online exhibition for 2022, *Containers for the Living and the Shades.*

Comprising 30 masterpieces from throughout Southern Africa, these exceptional storage vessels were produced between the mid-19th and mid-20th century and were crafted from a diverse array of materials, including wood, horn, clay and ostrich egg shell. We are particularly excited to present four large wooden vessels, including one of the finest extant examples, matched only by a similar vessel in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. Other highlights include an early Xhosa goat-shaped snuff container exhibited in the seminal exhibition *Africa: The Art of a Continent*. Included in the selection of snuff staffs, we are proud to present a masterful zoomorphic example that featured on the front cover of the important book *The Art of Southeast Africa.* This unusual staff is considered by many to be an icon from the region. Furthermore, this collection of snuff containers, staffs, wood, clay and shell vessels gives us a rare glimpse into the restrained aesthetic that characterizes the material culture of the southern African sub-continent.

Together with an insightful text by noted South African researcher, writer and curator Nessa Leibhammer, *Containers for the Living and the Shades* is our first focused online exhibition of southern African storage vessels, highlighting not only their elegance, refinement and craftsmanship but also their complex symbolic importance.

We hope you enjoy the online catalog and wish you all the best in 2022!

Dori & Daniel Rootenberg
NEW YORK CITY, JANUARY 2022

CONTAINERS FOR THE LIVING AND THE SHADES

NM LEIBHAMMER

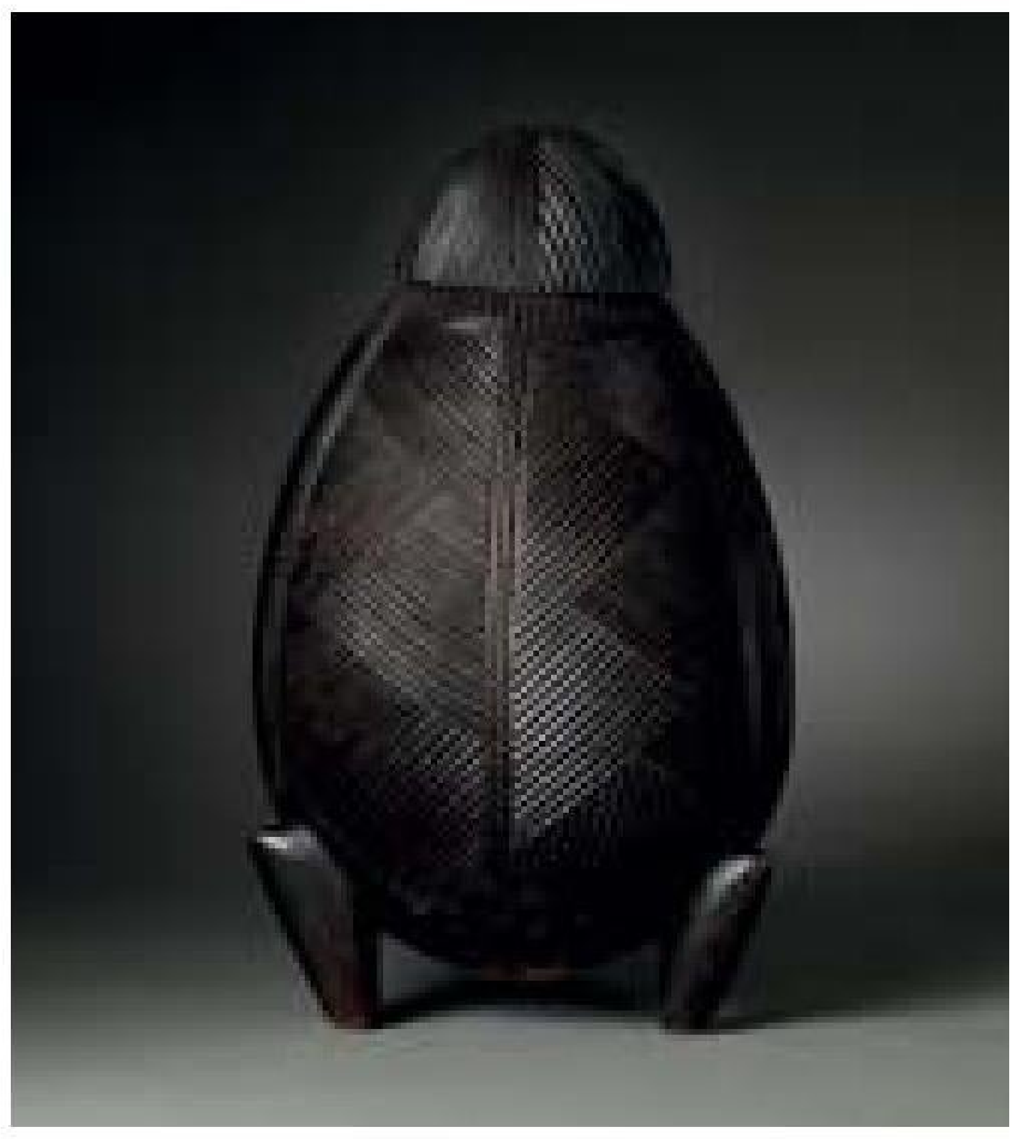
Introduction

The understated elegance of containers from southern Africa suggests meaningful content not just in the reverence for the life-sustaining and life-enhancing substances they hold, but also in the materials from which they are made. Unfolding the layered significances of these containers furthers understanding of the societies in which the vessels were created, in which they circulated, and in which they were used. In addition, it addresses the question as to why these receptacles, and the substances they held, were regarded as precious by those who made and used them.

Except for the earthenware vessels, most works featured in this catalogue date back to the 19th century and the social dynamics described here will be most relevant to this time – an era before colonisation, global capitalism and industrialisation laid waste to the ways of life that had existed in the region for over 1,000 years. Never static however, communities and individuals adjusted, succumbed or took advantage of social and political changes, innovating and carrying some customs forward while others fell into disuse.

A container's design and purpose seem self-evident – an inner void encapsulated by impermeable walls to hold, store, preserve and protect liquid and dry substances that nurture and sustain the well-being of the community. Beyond their utilitarian purposes, the forms, and the functions they fulfill, prompt a host of metaphorical associations. In their positive aspect they conjure archetypal notions of fullness and plenty, of the womb that brings forth new life, of the dome of the cosmos and the sphere of the earth. Art historian Nigel Barley has written that one type of container, '"pots" … lend themselves readily to discussions of spirits, consumption, essences and the like…'[1] To think about containers from the southern African region as merely functional is to miss an opportunity to appreciate their rich associative symbolism.

An inclination towards allegorical allusions, metamorphosis of form and visual punning is evident throughout the carved genre from southern Africa. Skeumorphism, where surface design elements drawn from basketry or pottery are reproduced on the outsides of carved objects, is a favoured visual feint. The exteriors of large wooden vessels as well as small snuff boxes frequently imitate the weave of basketwork while some are fabricated to resemble pottery containers with their distinctive raised bump (*amasumpa*)[2] design. Many of the items display a playfulness, a sensuous articulation of shape, occasionally a double entendre, perhaps even a creative conceit, and sometimes a riddle to tease and amuse.



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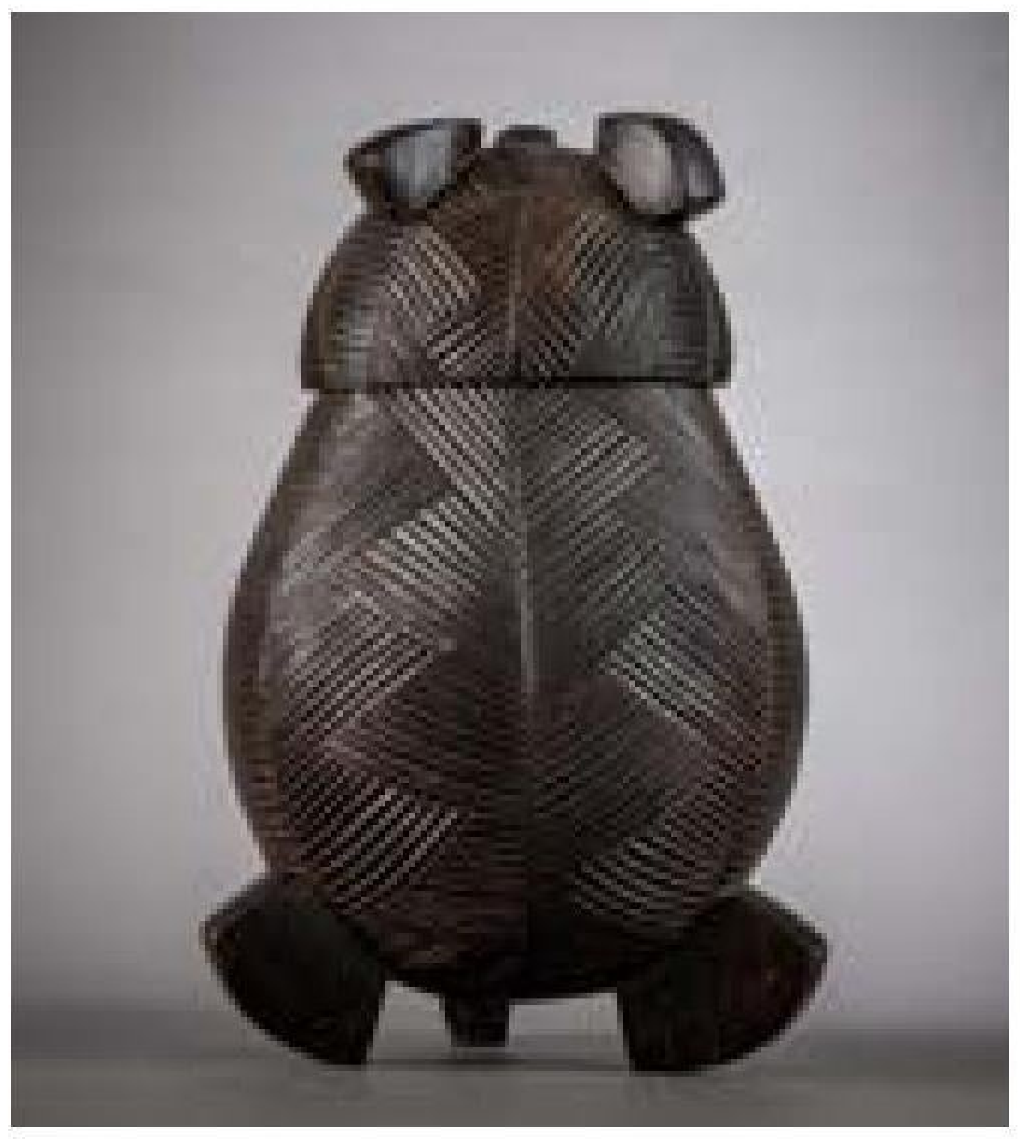

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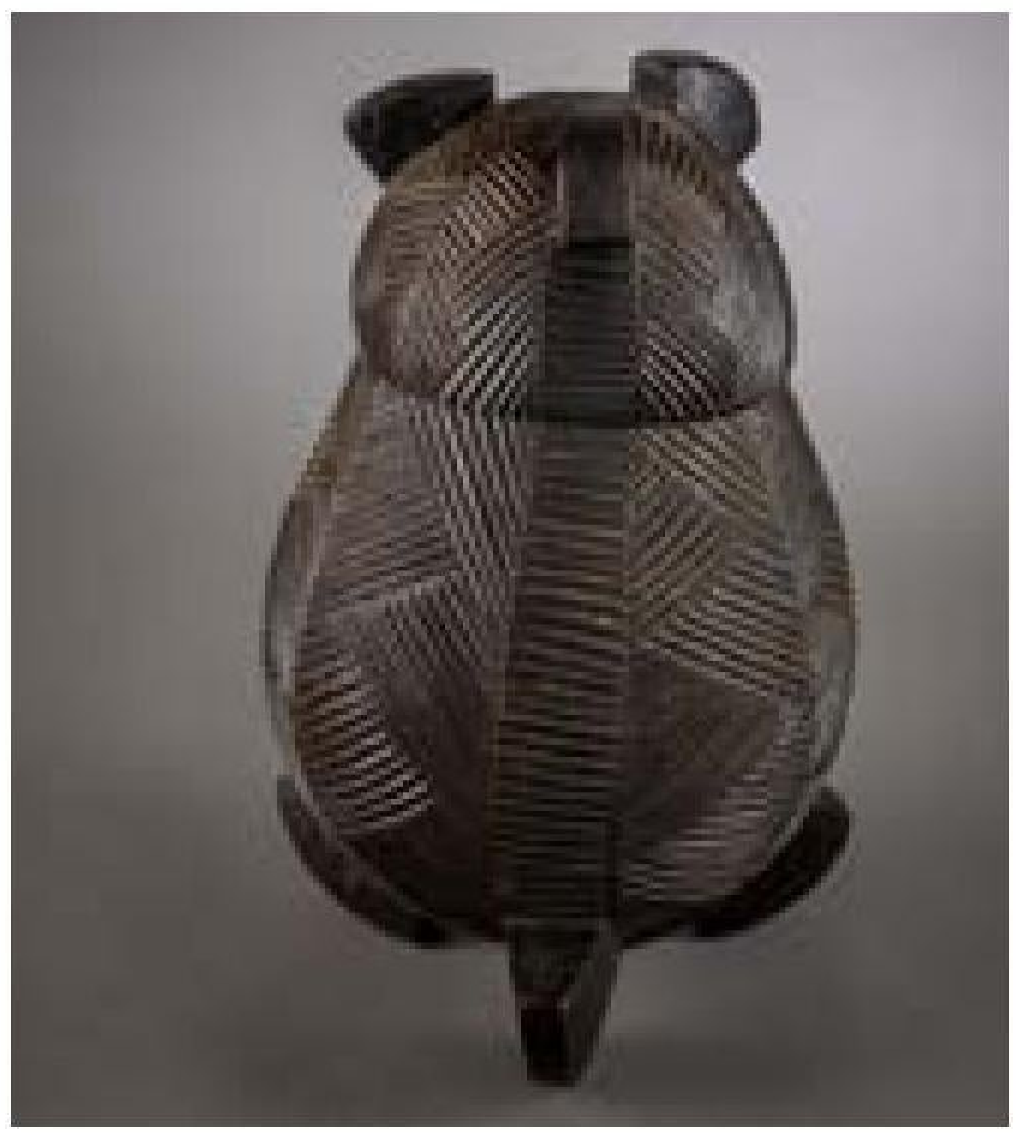

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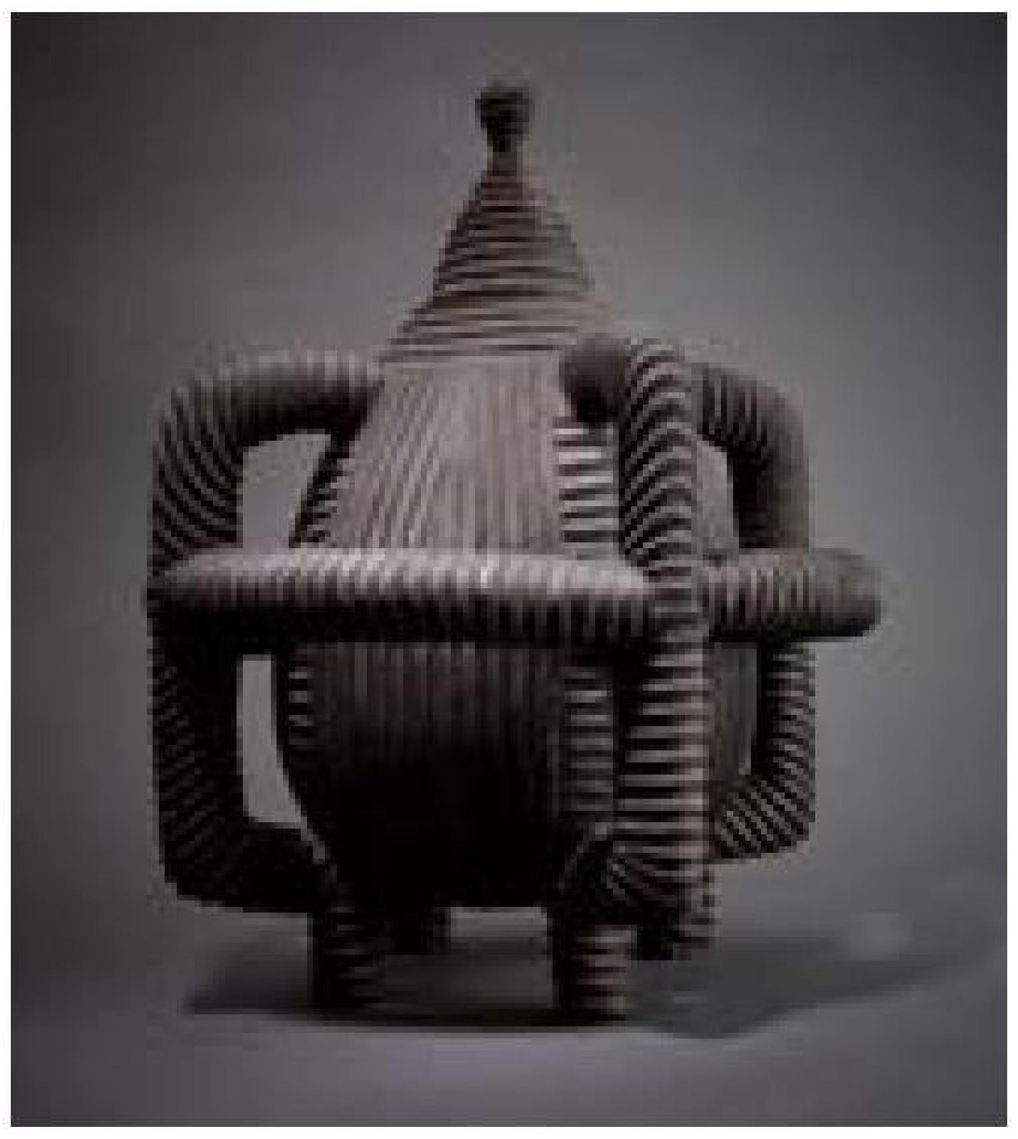

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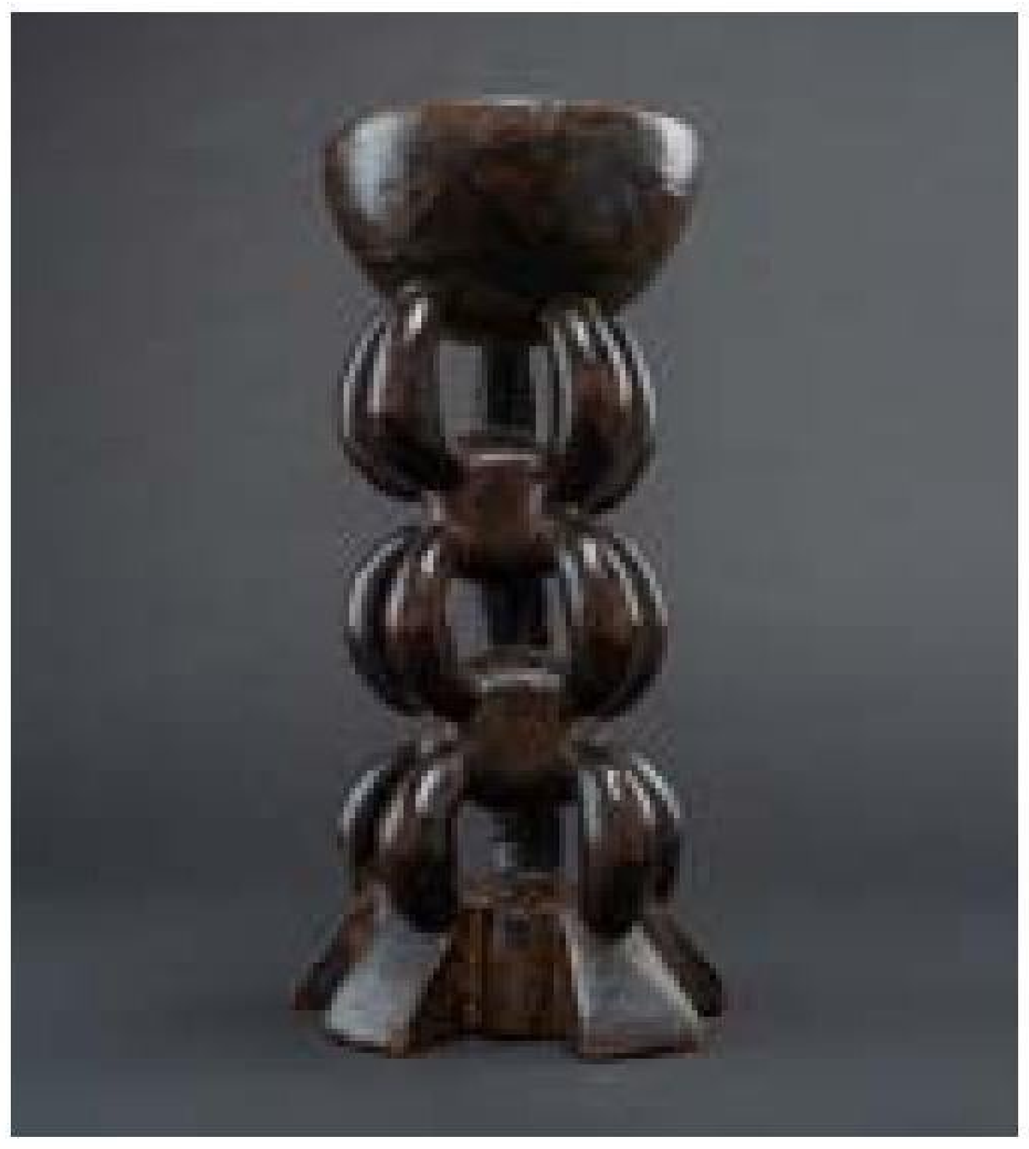

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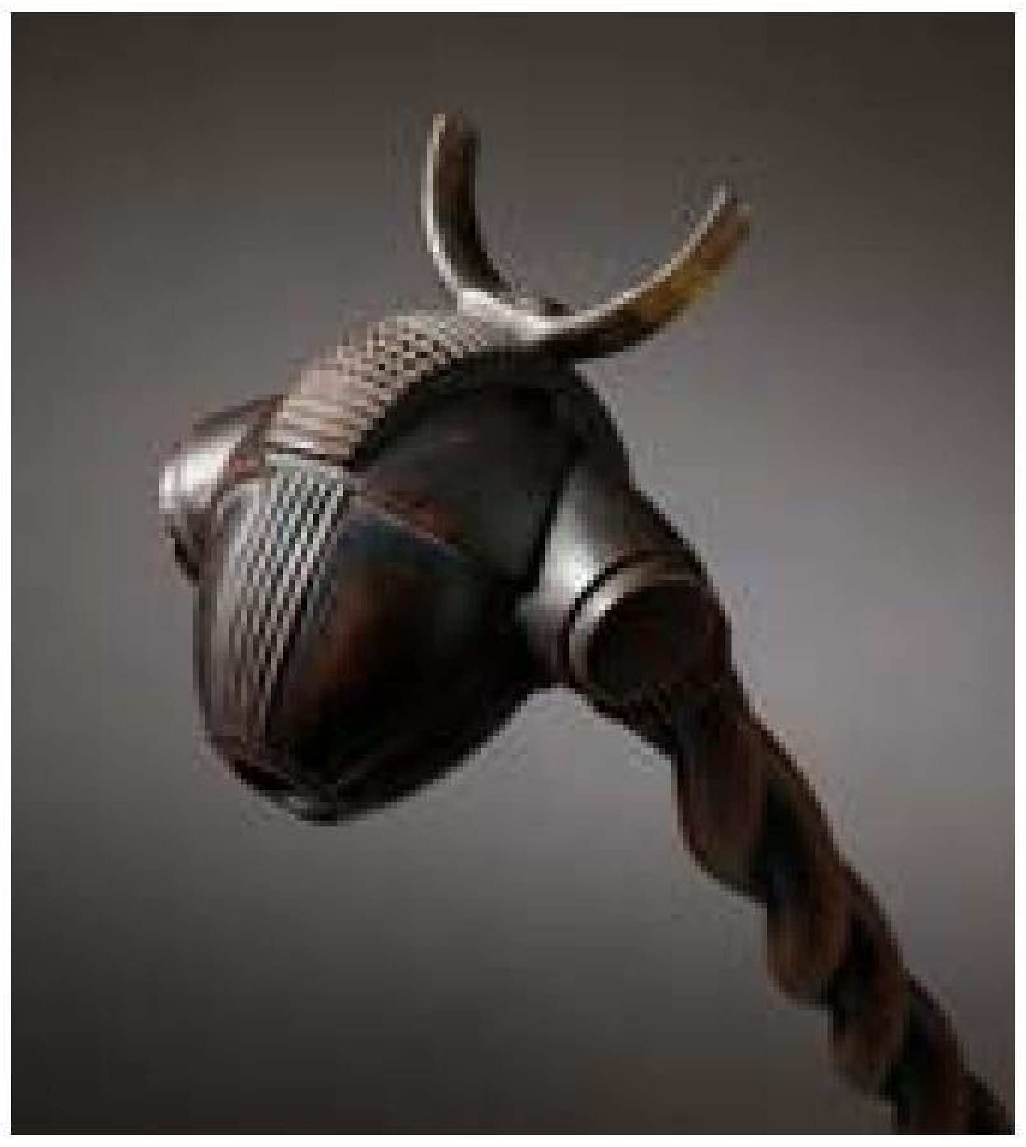

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The swelling bodies of large carved containers such as nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 with their small legs, mimic the full belly of a well-fed person; the nubile female form of the milk pail, no. 7, handled only by men, would conjure untold pleasures; and staff finials may become human heads such as the delightfully humorous no. 22 with its moon face and horns. Other instances include headrests that allude to cattle; staff shafts that become people or snakes, and so on. The elaborate structure that holds up the bowl of no. 6 presents a riddle, a 'visual tease,' … are these curved struts *holding up like arms* or *standing on each other like legs*? The eye of the beholder is drawn up and down the form, shifting perception as it tries to make sense of the relational dynamics. All these features lend themselves to reading the forms as vital and embodied with life.

Thought systems in southern Africa

The idea that so-called inanimate objects are animate, filled with vitality, does not have much traction in our post enlightenment era … and yet … numinous beliefs linger, threading through contemporary consciousness. Nature worship, in which spirit is believed to infuse both the living and the inert comes in many forms: Gaia followers hold that the earth is synonymous with the mother goddess; 'living' or 'holy' water is a medium of birth and rebirth in Christian baptisms; and religious Jews seek ritual purity in the *mikveh* (a bath of naturally collected water). The extent of the significance and authority that these beliefs hold is dependent on the degree of power invested in them by society.

Agropastoral[3] communities established in the southern sub-continent of Africa during the independent era[4] are distinguished by four main language groups: isiZulu (including isiXhosa),[5] Sesotho, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Oral narratives, similarities in social dynamics, material culture and belief systems indicate the possibility of a shared origin, with gradual movement, from the Great Lakes region of East Africa southwards along the eastern side of the continent for approximately 1,000 years.[6] While the timing and nature of these movements is debated, what is evident is that, with them, came a way of life vested with a deep veneration for cattle, the lineage ancestors of the family and for all natural phenomenon. From this flowed a symbolic belief system that structured people's relationships within society and the larger chain of being.

The four decorated ostrich egg shells come, however, from the social complex known as a hunter-gatherer society where theories about the world, the cosmos and the deities are somewhat different to those who follow agropastoral lifestyles. For this reason, these works will be discussed separately. Nevertheless, no culture is hermetically sealed and, having lived alongside and amongst each other for centuries, with intermarriage not uncommon, there were inevitable exchanges of ideas and value systems.[7]

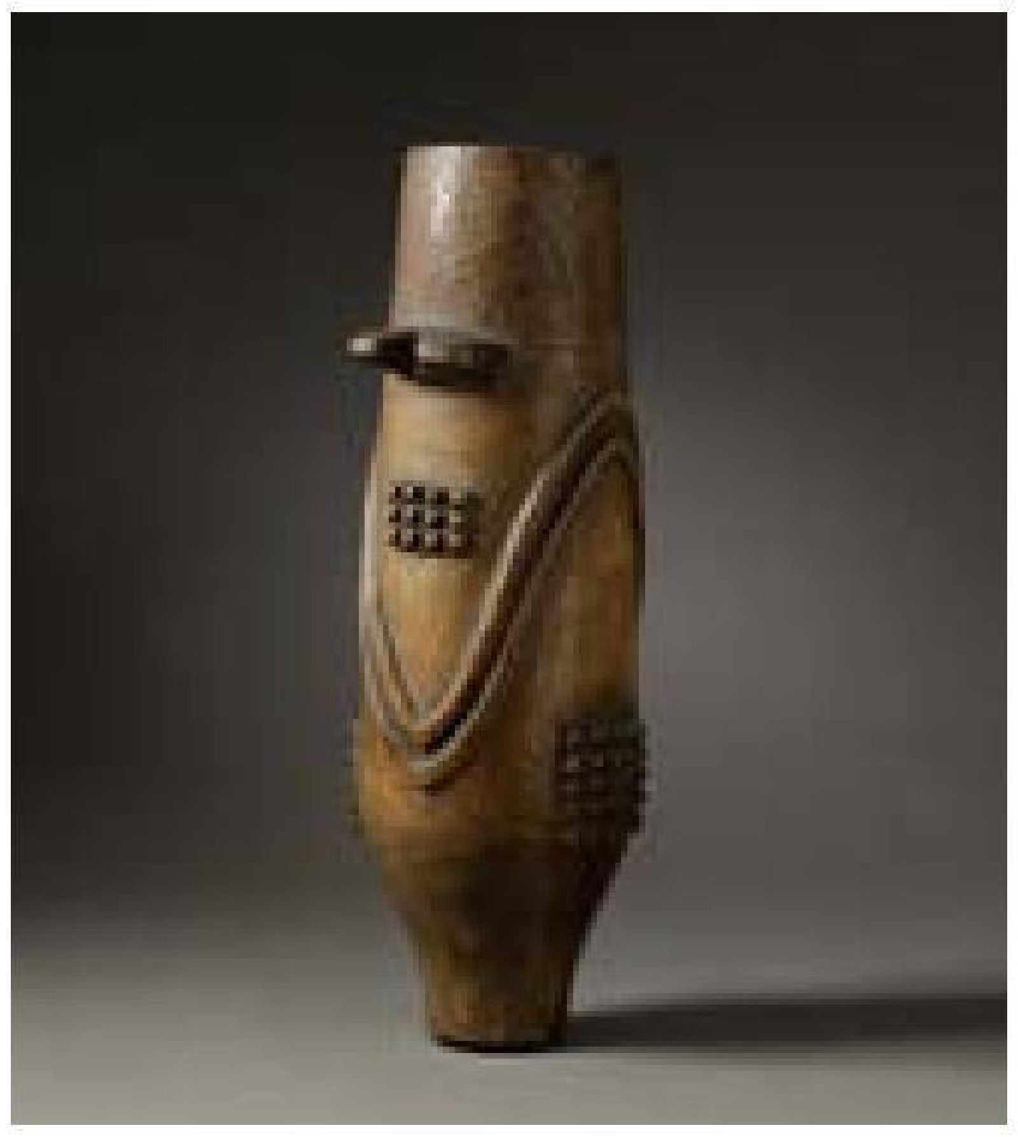
The African gnosis that underpins the symbolic systems of 19th century southern African agropastoral farming communities extends into daily life, manifesting in all its forms and shapes. This cluster of concepts that includes the reverence of ancestors, and the centrality of cattle may seem, at times, incongruent to outsiders, especially those used to Western associative inferences. This does not in any way devalue items from Africa. Appreciating the specific dynamics at play offers a greater understanding of the containers, ultimately more rewarding than pursuing an outsider's line of thought.

According to the Reverend Aver-Axel Berglund, power, in Zulu thought, comes from three sources. The first is the Lord-of-the-Sky especially in his relationship with the Earth-as-Mother. In particular, it is the male sky that sends rain to fertilize the female earth, making all life possible. This 'living water' collects in rivers and streams, cascades down waterfalls and wells up from the ground as springs. The second is the clan lineage, especially recently departed relatives (*amadlozi*). These ancestral spirits, or 'shades,' are a constant presence in daily life, 'brooding' over their descendants and must be honoured and obeyed. They control procreative power and maintain moral authority over the living. The third realm of power is present in material substances such as stones, earth, minerals and all species of vegetation.

These three wellsprings are vital to life. Rainfall enables the fecundity of the land, livestock, people, crops and cattle, pleasing the ancestors by ensuring procreative, substantive and spiritual wealth in its broadest sense. All these are positive, associated with growth, coolness and goodness, whereas excessive heat, anger, illness, barrenness and dryness are negative, undesirable states.

The life-sustaining substances of milk, water (rain) and clay (earth), wood from trees, horn and bone from cattle or wild animals, and metal from the earth, all form part of the sentient matrix within which humans exist. Thus, not only the substance inside containers, but the materials from which they are made, are infused with potency in a wider field of association. To understand the containers, we will first look more closely at the system within which they operated, then the substances they contained, and lastly the vessels themselves.

The importance of cattle – those ‘wet nosed gods.’[8]



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Cows were effectively mobile banks,[9] and the milk they produced was the equivalent of money. The spatial arrangement of the classic homestead (*imizi*), where individual dwellings faced inwards towards the central cattle byre affirmed the centrality of cattle to society.[10] While the property of the homestead head, cattle also belong to the lineage ancestors. These beasts, and their sacred by-products of milk, meat, blood and gall, were pivotal in facilitating relationships between ancestors and their living descendants. While the eating of meat was reserved for special occasions, milk consumed in a soured form (*amasi*) was a staple. This sacred liquid, milked into elegantly carved containers (*amathunga*) such as no. 7 by young boys, was poured into calabashes or hide bags and allowed to sour, becoming a yogurt-like food stuff.

Bjerk writes that the practises around milk in 18th–19th century Zulu Kingdom were ‘obsessive’ and that it was a ‘magical substance imbued with instrumental efficacy.’[11] During Shaka ka Senzangankhona’s reign the ‘control of the flow of milk in Zulu society was the source of his power and the mechanism by which he controlled the state.’[12] One of these strategies saw young boys, hand-picked to look after the king’s cattle, drink milk straight from the udders of the royal cows – literally and metaphorically 'drinking of life' that flowed from the king.[13] As adults, these select few often became the close confidants and companions of the king, occupying high leadership positions.

The colour white

The whiteness of milk is significant, equated with, and connected to, seemingly unrelated (according to western logic) entities such as the semen of men, the ancestral shades, living water and amniotic fluid. All are considered to be white in colour, a sign that they possess procreative power infused with potency. In isiZulu, for example, semen is referred to as 'the water of men' (*amalotha*), the same word used to describe 'living water' sent as rain by the Lord-of-the-Sky. Rain fertilising the earth is thus seen as analogous to the way men fertilize women, creating new life in the ongoing chain of living. The domain and entity of the Lord-of-the-Sky, as well as the sacred herds of cattle that graze the cloud-filled heavens, is white as is the place of the ancestors and anything associated with them.

A remote and unpredictable being, the Lord-of-the-Sky can only be approached through the family ancestors. These departed 'white ones' (*amadlozi*), live underground in the spirit world which is a place of shadows (*emathunzini*).[14] As lineage members, the ancestors retain an active interest in their families alive on earth, 'brooding' over them to ensure their descendants uphold societal standards. This entails maintaining custom and showing respect to the ancestors by making small offerings of food, drink, and snuff. This keeps the spirits happy and tractable, preventing them from fading away through lack of nourishment and attention. Ancestors shun the light and, when visiting their relatives on earth, favour dark, windowless dwellings. The family altar (*umsamo*), an innermost space away from the entrance of the home, was especially alluring and it is here that the shades were believed to linger. Attracted by the darkness, the aroma of a scented herb (*imphepho*) burning,[15] and offerings of snuff, beer and meat, the shades were drawn near so that their living relatives could communicate with them. Libations of beer were poured into beer vessels (*ukhamba*) especially small versions of it (*umancishana*), their black outer surfaces an added enticement for the ancestral shades.

The metaphoric association of the colour white, ancestors, birth and rebirth is believed to be also perceptible in the condition of newborns who emerge into the world covered with a white substance.[16] This is considered proof that the ancestors, responsible for the processes of conception, gestation and the continuation of the lineage, are active agents in a successful birth. In an analogous example, trainee diviners (*ithwasane*) undergo a putative underwater ordeal so that they may be 'reborn' as qualified diviners (*izangoma*). If they are successful in this perilous undertaking, their 'rebirth' as fully fledged diviners will be marked by the white clay applied to their faces and bodies, a clear indication that they are near to, and in communication, with ancestral spirits.[17]

Water from the Lord-of-the Sky

Raindrops, also known as the daughters of the Lord-of-the-Sky, collect in streams, rivers, and pools. The sounds they make as cascading waterfalls, bubbling springs, and murmuring rivulets, are considered signs of 'living water' (*amanzi aphilayo*). A cool liquid, it is a positive substance and the opposite of evil. It fertilizes the earth and in its moral sense, water is not only a symbol and medium of purification from evil, it is also a carrier of life itself. 'Living water' is equated with the fluid of men (*amalotha*/semen) that combines with the water of women (amniotic fluid) resulting in the positive outcome of pregnancy, growth of the child in the womb and subsequent birth.[18] Not all bodies of water are 'alive.' Some, such as in man-made dams, are considered barren. Drought, the lack of water, associative dryness and excessive heat are negative states believed to be caused by the anger of the ancestors or the Lord-of-the-Sky.

Beer for both living and departed

'Living water' was a crucial ingredient for the brewing of beer (*utshwala*). It was taken from a running stream, spring or just below a waterfall to ensure that the ancestors were part of the substance and process. The brewing and drinking of *utshwala* played a central role in family-based customary observances and the life of communities.[19] Beer, a social lubricant, was given out as the largess of chiefs, offered in tribute and played an important role in marriage transactions.[20] Drinking from the same beer vessel was not only about the conviviality of the meal but about the morality of sharing food.

Beer was poured onto graves as a libation to the ancestors and drunk ceremoniously during family reconciliation ceremonies to restore harmonious relationships. The first pour of freshly brewed beer was placed on the cool, dark, sacred *umsamo* (a sacred place in a dwelling where the ancestors visit and can be communicated with) so that the departed ancestors could 'sip' from the offering. A small blackened clay vessel called *umancishana,* or *umgodi wenyoka* (nest of the snake) was favoured for this libation. The reference to the snake is significant in that ancestors were believed to sometimes manifest in the form of a small serpent.

Women grew the grain, made the pots and controlled the production of beer. In Sesotho, the word *pitsa* refers both to the pot in which beer was brewed and the womb in which a child is conceived, nourished and grows. In southern Africa, the making of beer was analogous to procreation. The heat needed to ferment a mixture of grain and water to produce beer was compared to the 'heat' of sexual activity needed for the fluids of men and women to mix successfully for conception to occur. Both are processes in which transubstantiation occurs through the presence of 'heat' and are seen as synonymous with the making of pots and the smelting iron ore discussed later.

Snuff enjoyed by all

While all the above substances are liquid, snuff, the powdered leaves of the tobacco plant, is dry. Not native to Africa, it was most likely brought from the Americas by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Like beer, it was a substance for both men and women to enjoy and to share.

It is said that snuff-taking 'cleared the head', making ancestral voices easier to hear and helping the imbiber experience a sense of elation. This heightened state of consciousness was also considered a transformation, an elevation of spirit taking the user closer to the ancestral realm. Strict rules of etiquette governed the giving and taking of snuff [21] and, as with beer, powerful and wealthy men were expected to show their largess in the offering of copious quantities to family members and guests. Snuff-taking, along with the consumption of meat and beer, was an important part of celebrations and social gatherings.

Ann Wanless, a past curator of the Africana Museum (now Museum Africa) writes how amongst the southern Basotho there is a metaphorical relationship between tobacco, the penis, sex and fertility.[22] Tobacco was linked to the masculine aspect at several levels. The word for tobacco, *kwae*, for example was, in polite language (*hlonepho*) an alternative word for the penis. There are many Sesotho references that connect tobacco and sex such as the saying 'Kwae is a thing smoked at night by women.'[23]

Unlike beer, tobacco production was in the hands of men, including the making of the snuff containers. While the alternative word for tobacco is *kwae* (penis), the word *koma* or snuff-box also refers to the phallus. Thus in the metaphoric language associated with beer and snuff there is a complimentary relationship between the genders and the processes of transformation in which the ancestors are deeply invested. These processes are integral to the fecundity of the family as well as social equilibrium and well-being.

Containers for the water of men/*amalotha*

In some instances, the penis, the source of precious male fluid, had its own 'container.' This was in the form of finely carved and constructed sheaths (*ingxiba/isidla*) that were worn under outer garments. Shaw and Van Warmelo write that it was a striking piece of apparel and considered the most important garment for post-initiate men in the former Transkei and Ciskei.[24] In this region a wearer was 'adequately clad' with just this article of dress and to appear without one was considered shameful. They were made from a multitude of materials including wood, horn, gourds and plant fibre and are recorded as sometimes being embellished with small metal bells, beadwork, brass rings or small chains.[25]

The walls have meanings too!

The discussion above has given some insights into the sacred, interlinked meanings that liquid and dry substances had in 18th and 19th century southern African agropastoral communities. Given the encompassing worldview, it is reasonable to infer that meaning is true as much for the cherished contents as for the containers that hold them.

Pottery: earth, water, heat

Earthenware vessels are fashioned from clay – a combination of *amalotha* or 'living water' from the male sky, and the female earth, both infused with the potency of the ancestors. Women potters dig and process the clay, skilfully forming it into useful and desirable shapes. An elemental and conceptual shift occurs when, once dried and shaped, naturally occurring clay is irreversibly transformed through the heat of fire into a pot – a cultural object useful to society. As noted above, this process is closely aligned to the 'creating' of the child in the womb where sexual heat assists in 'moulding' the child and is similarly associated with the heat for fermentation in beer making.

Successful acts of transformation such as water and earth to pottery, iron ore into tools and weapons, and the waters of men and women into a child only happened when heat, a gift from the shades, was present.[26] However excessive, uncontrolled heat was considered dangerous. Those who possessed the skills to harness it were treated as special, with the potential to use its power for both good and evil. Respected but feared, many formed a social class of their own with some female potters, also often midwives, married to blacksmiths. Many of these blacksmiths were also diviners and healers

The spirit of wood

With its roots in the earth, contiguous with the ancestors, and its branches reaching the sky, the realm of God, a tree is charged with spirit. Since ancient times, traditionally or biblically, trees have represented the link between earth and heaven and have been revered as places where spirits dwell. They often grow many hundreds of years old, observing time slowly, more enduring than other forms of life, witness to the longue durée. As an 'elder', they were treated with reverence and respect. Author Avar-Axel Berglund recorded that, amongst Zulu-speakers, a complete tree is never cut down and, when a branch is to be severed, the tree must receive an apology. Heaven-herds, those experts on protecting people, livestock, crops and homes from dangers from the sky, who have received their calling from the Sky-Lord rather than the ancestors, and equipped to drive off lightning, hail and violent storms, are known to ask forgiveness from plants before digging them up.[27]

Similarly trees, or parts of trees, were suitable receptacles for spirits. Mtshapi ka Noradu explained the connection between trees and the spirit of Zulu kings to James Stuart. He revealed that, in the case of a king dying and being buried away from his country, a senior councillor (*induna*) would be sent to this place of first burial. Selecting any species of tree growing near the grave, he would pray to it and then dig it up. Along with a stone from the site, this tree was carried back to Emakhosi (the Valley of the Kings) for reburial alongside other notable rulers. Together with the stone, the relocation of the tree constituted the bringing back of the royal ancestor. This was the case with the spirits of Senzangankona, Ndaba, Jama, Shaka and Dingane[28], all of whom died away from the royal burial grounds.

Ordinary people could also relocate their ancestors' spirits. When circumstances such as fleeing from unpopular rulers, moving away from unpleasant neighbours, escaping the depredations of war or colonizing new areas at the behest of chiefs, necessitated a homestead move, there was a pragmatic custom (*ukubuyisa*) whereby ancestral spirits were shown the way from old homes to new.[29] Living relatives would offer their ancestor a branch of the buffalo thorn tree (*umphafa*), inviting them to enter the bough which would then be taken to the new home. This temporary reliquary enabled the spirit of the deceased to move from its original place of burial to its new resting place.[30]

Bone and horn: the work of men

As with the working of wood, it was men[31] who fashioned bone and horn. These became items such as spoons, amulets, pipes, cupping implements and snuff boxes. The sources of bone and horn were from domestic livestock or from wild animals, such as antelope and rhinoceros, felled during the hunt. Hunting was an activity for men, and animal husbandry was largely the domain of men. However, both women and men participated in snuff taking and carried containers to hold it.

Decorated ostrich egg shells

Ostrich eggs shells (OES) have been used as containers by hunter-gatherer communities in the sub-arid environments in southern Africa for about 100,000 years.[32] A number of these have been found buried in caches of up to 15 eggs, particularly in the northern Cape and in Namibia.[33] Their use is well documented and it seems that women often owned a set of between 5 to 10.

The contents of the egg, yolk and albumin, were a source of nourishment and the shells, once empty, a perfect receptacle for water, being both light and strong. Buried at strategic places including sites of habitation or pathways, they were deliberately placed as insurance for future need. Water was the most commonly transported substance but traces of specularite have also been found. Called *//hara* – a steel grey or bluish substance – it was used as a cosmetic to enhance appearance at public performances such as dances. This shiny, powdery iron ore, soft and greasy to the touch, adheres to the skin and clothes, making them glitter, especially in the firelight. It was traded across southern Africa and was considered by some communities as more precious than gold or ivory.

Water, besides being critical to the survival of hunter-gatherer people in the arid regions of Namibia and the Northern Cape, is considered an axis mundi that mediates between the realms over and under the surface of the earth. Shamans in trance are recorded as entering waterholes and travelling beneath to the spirit world to access healing powers. Analogous beliefs amongst farmer communities are evident[34] and point to either exchanges over the last 1,000 years, or aspects of a shared belief system.

Conclusion

In the past, many western art history scholars thought of southern African material culture as merely utilitarian and without further significance. The text above has shown that there are conceptual systems that underpin both the contents, and the containers themselves, making the objects profoundly meaningful to the communities that fashioned and used them. These were treasured items, some handed down from one generation to the next, acting as mnemonics bearing witness to the memory of individual and family members, linking the living to the departed. Association with a single owner throughout their lifetime made for an intimate connection not only by a closeness of association but through the conveyance of bodily substances of the user such as perspiration and oils from their skin to the object. Personhood and objecthood became fused as owner, object, and the presence of the numinous became inseparable extensions of each other.[35]

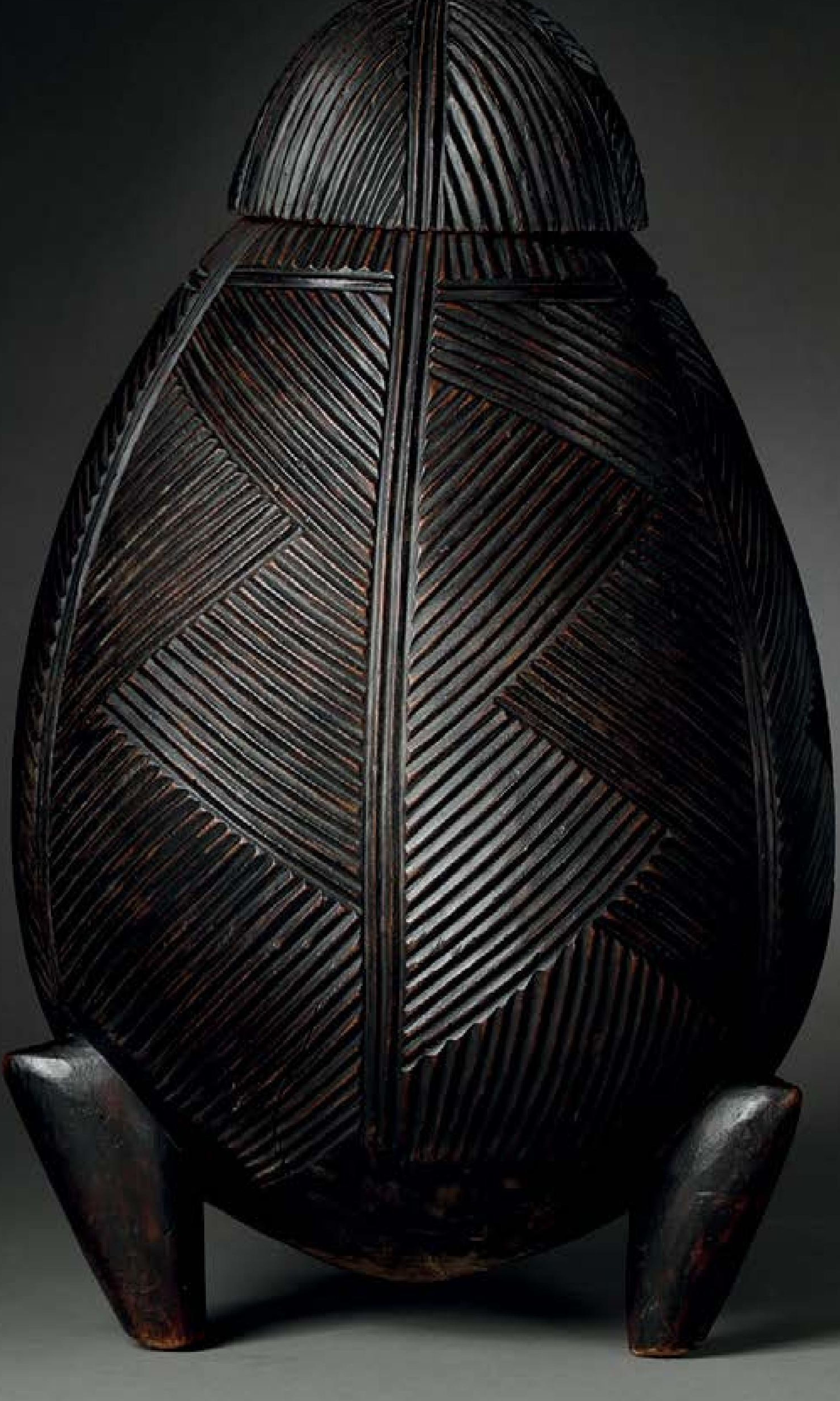
CATALOGUE

VESSELS AND BOWLS FROM WOOD

There is a degree of mystery surrounding the origins and purpose of these rare large carved lidded vessels. Old labels often identify them as 'milk' or 'beer' vessels, and occasionally 'snuff' containers, but those presently known in collections show no signs of use. Some have been referred to as Swazi or Zulu yet none, so far, have been traced to either the Swazi Kingdom or the old Zulu Kingdom north of the Thukela River. Those that have provenance are dated to the 19th century and are documented as coming from the area below the Thukela River, which was the Colony of Natal under British rule from 1843 to 1910.

One suggestion is that these were made as virtuoso pieces to impress visitors to the Colony. There is firm documentation that some were commissioned for international exhibitions held in centres such as Paris, London and Chicago that were popular from the mid 19th century onward. Two such lidded vessels in the British Museum have been linked to Unobadula, a carver from the Colony of Natal who is documented as having made items for the 1862 Empire Exhibition in London.[36] However, there is an example in the Museum of Natural History in Lille France that was accessioned before 1850[37] that predates the first International Exhibition in London in 1851. This is proof that vessels of this sort were not only produced as showpieces for colonial and empire exhibitions.

Furthermore, in the account of his life, Baleni ka Silwana told colonial official James Stuart how he was one of Mpande ka Senzangankhona's (1798–1872) milkers at the Ndabakawombez and Nombendu royal homesteads (*amakhanda*).[38] He recounted how, as a young boy, he would milk into a 18 x 8 inch (45.72 cm x 20.32 cm) carved container covered with an ornate lid which was described as a 'small carved vessel … a sort of cup' decorated with patterning burnt with a heated assegai or length of iron. One of these covered containers accompanied 40 head of cattle and was kept in the royal women's enclosure (*isigodlo*). Silwana explained how, when full, it was carried at arm's length, above the head, back to the *isigodlo* where the milk was poured into calabashes and other receptacles that aided the souring process. This vessel may be an earlier example of a carved lidded container such as vessels nos. 1, 2 and 3. Thus, the pre-1850 example in Lille, and this description by Silwana, confirm the existence of early precedents for the form.



1

LIDDED VESSEL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

ZULU KINGDOM/COLONY OF NATAL

19th century

Wood, pokerwork

Height: 16 1/8 in; Width 9 ¾ in (41 cm x 25 cm)

PROVENANCE

William Moore, Los Angeles

Merton Simpson, New York

The Conru Collection, Brussels

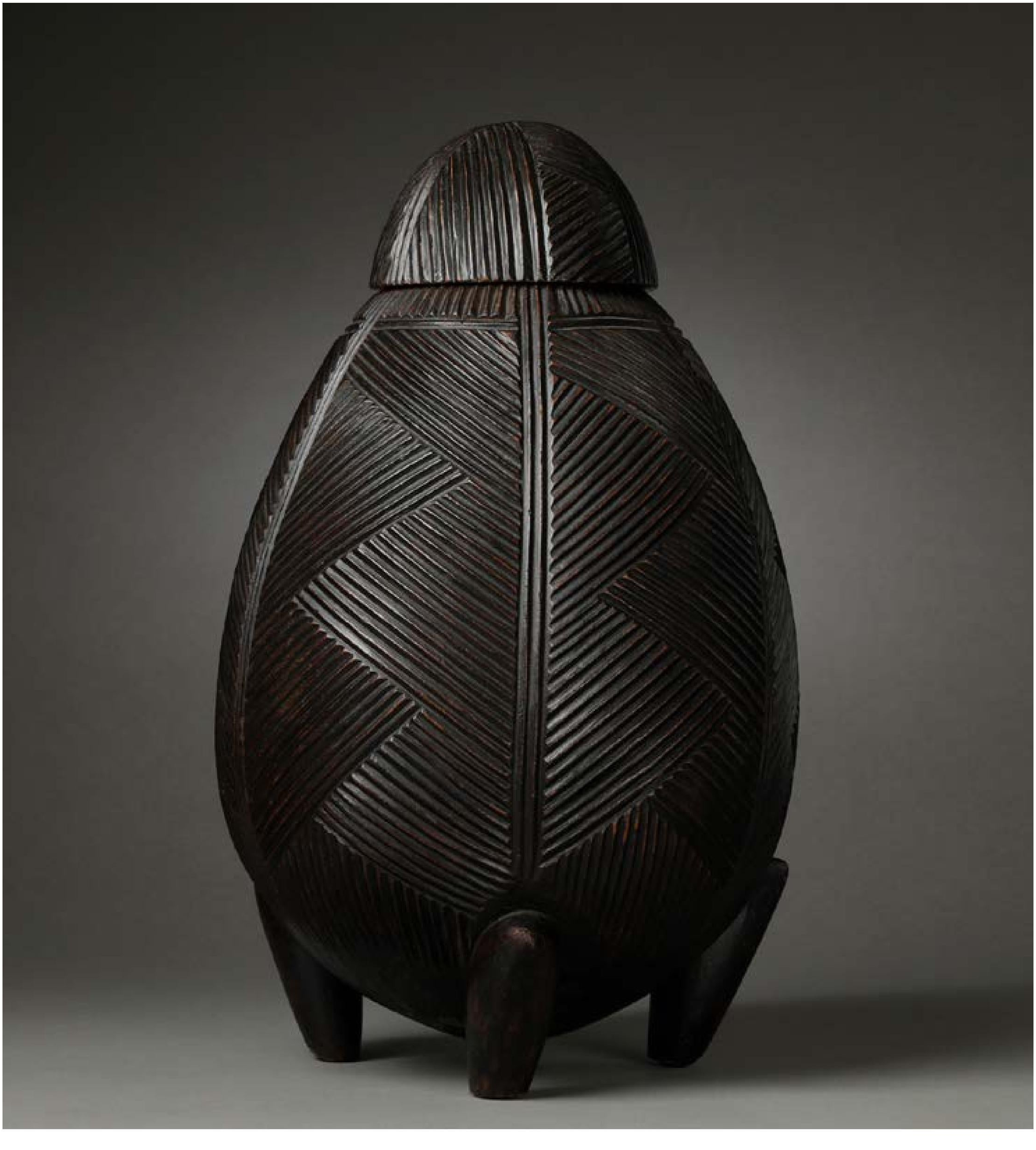
Private Collection, Belgium

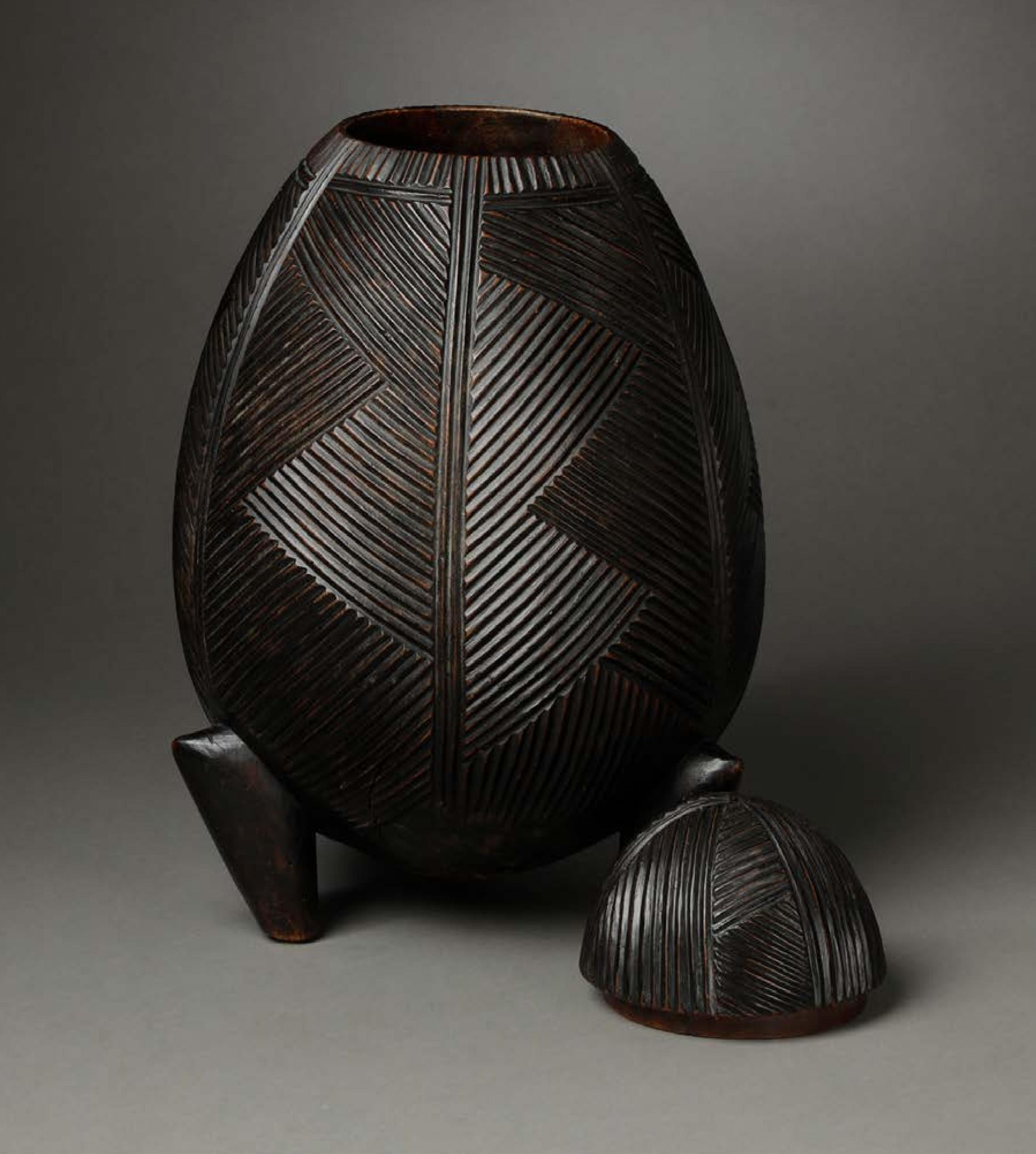
PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 55, 182 no 2.

This container, with its precise decoration and matching lid, manifests a profound clarity of form. Its elegant shape approximates an ovoid sphere with a sleekly swelling body supported by three small legs. These enhance the sense of satiation, of being well-filled, appearing to buckle slightly in response to the suggested weight from above. Further amplifying the sense of tumescence is the finely carved, striated pattern, that articulates its surface. Exactingly wrought, the interlaced and grooved design is more precisely executed than the carved surfaces of the second set of vessels. It is likely that this pattern seen also on other containers, is a simulation of a basket-weave following the southern African skeumorphic tradition where one form imitates another.

This container, and one in the Art Institute of Chicago,[39] are two of the finest extant examples of this style of lidded vessel. There is a third in the Brenthurst Collection[40] held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and these may have been carved by the same hand or family workshop.





2 and 3

LIDDED VESSELS

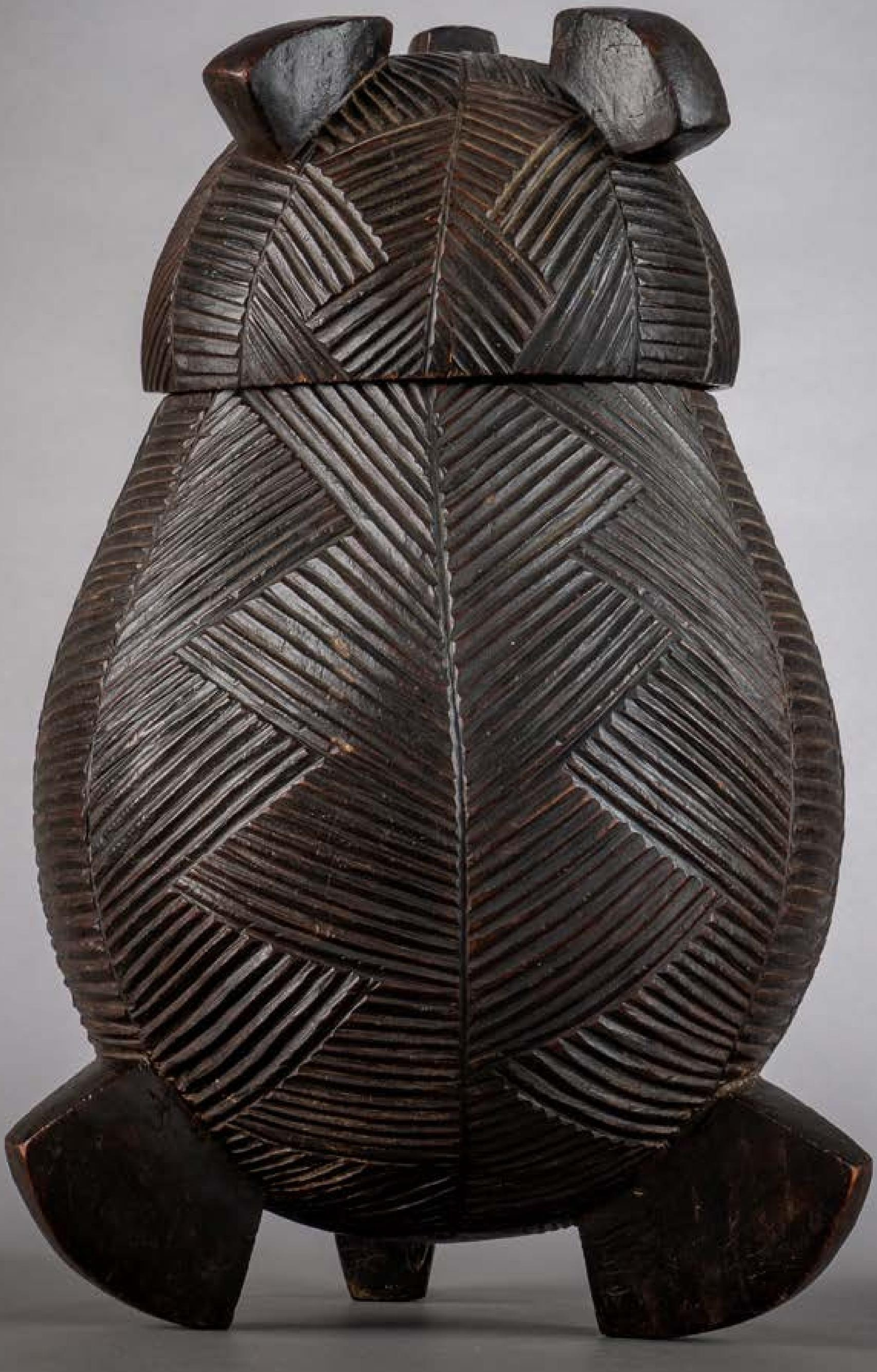
VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

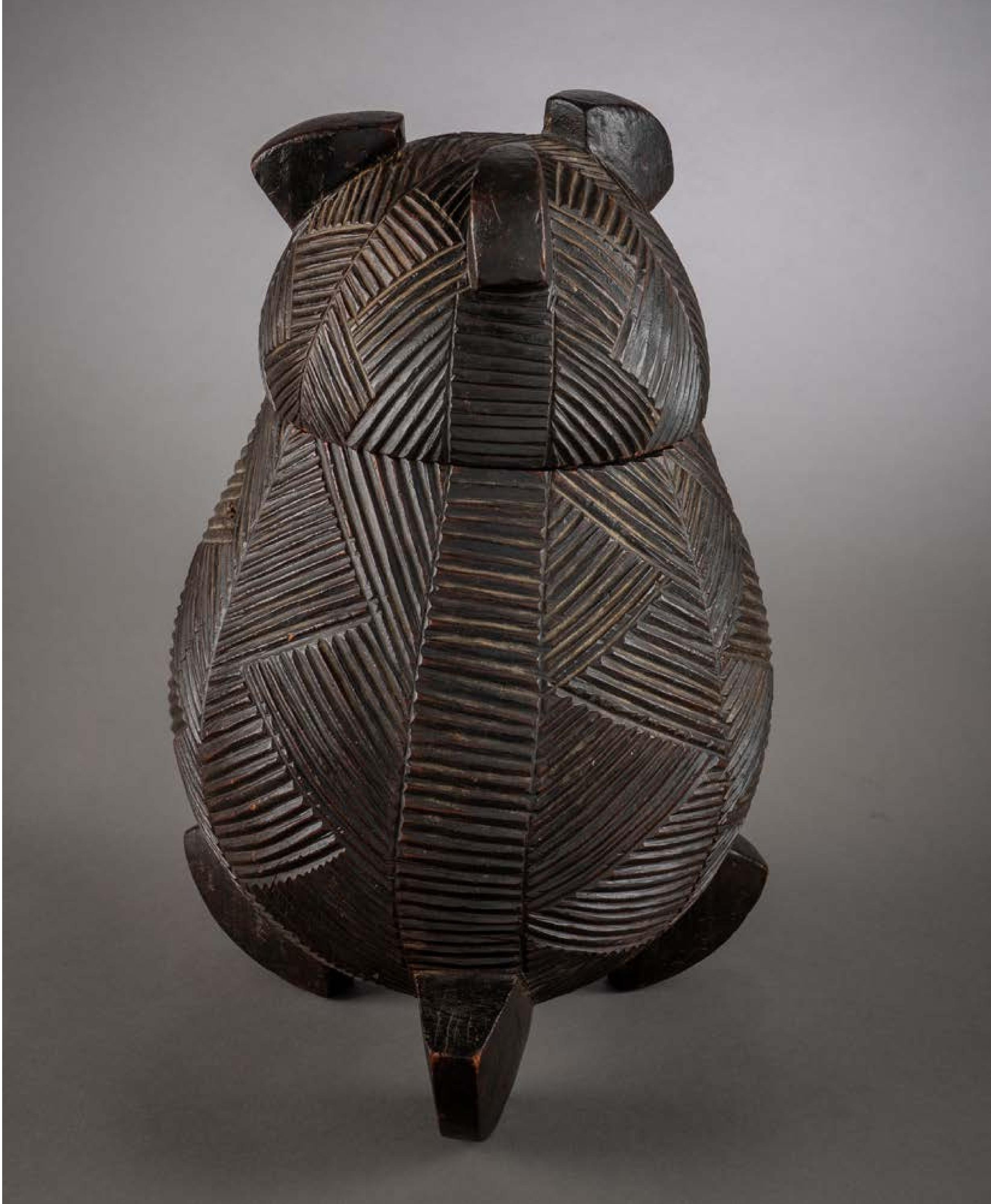
ZULU KINGDOM /COLONY OF NATAL

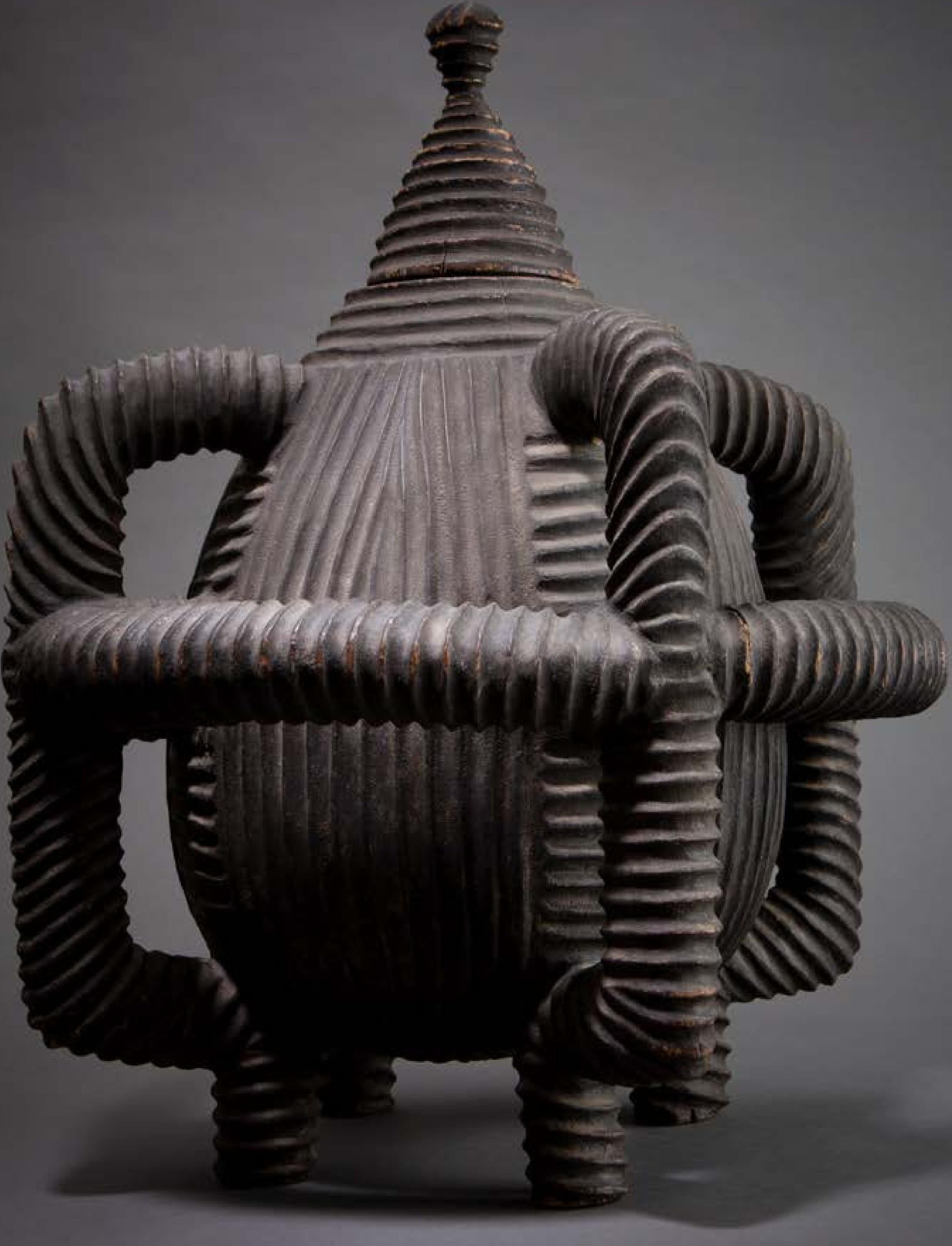
19th century
Wood, pokerwork
Height: 14 in; Width: 8 ½
in (35.3 cm x 21.6 cm)

PROVENANCE
Private UK collection
Marcuson & Hall, Brussels

This matched set of vessels is unusual in that they are seldom found in pairs. Their overall forms are embellished with a grooved and interlaced pattern and their rotund bodies each stand on three chunky legs. The lids echo the shape of the main body in their rotundity and surface detail as well as having three carved feet on which to rest. The design of the lids makes it possible for them to be used as drinking containers. In this they differ from some examples whose lids were not created to be self-supporting







4

LIDDED VESSEL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

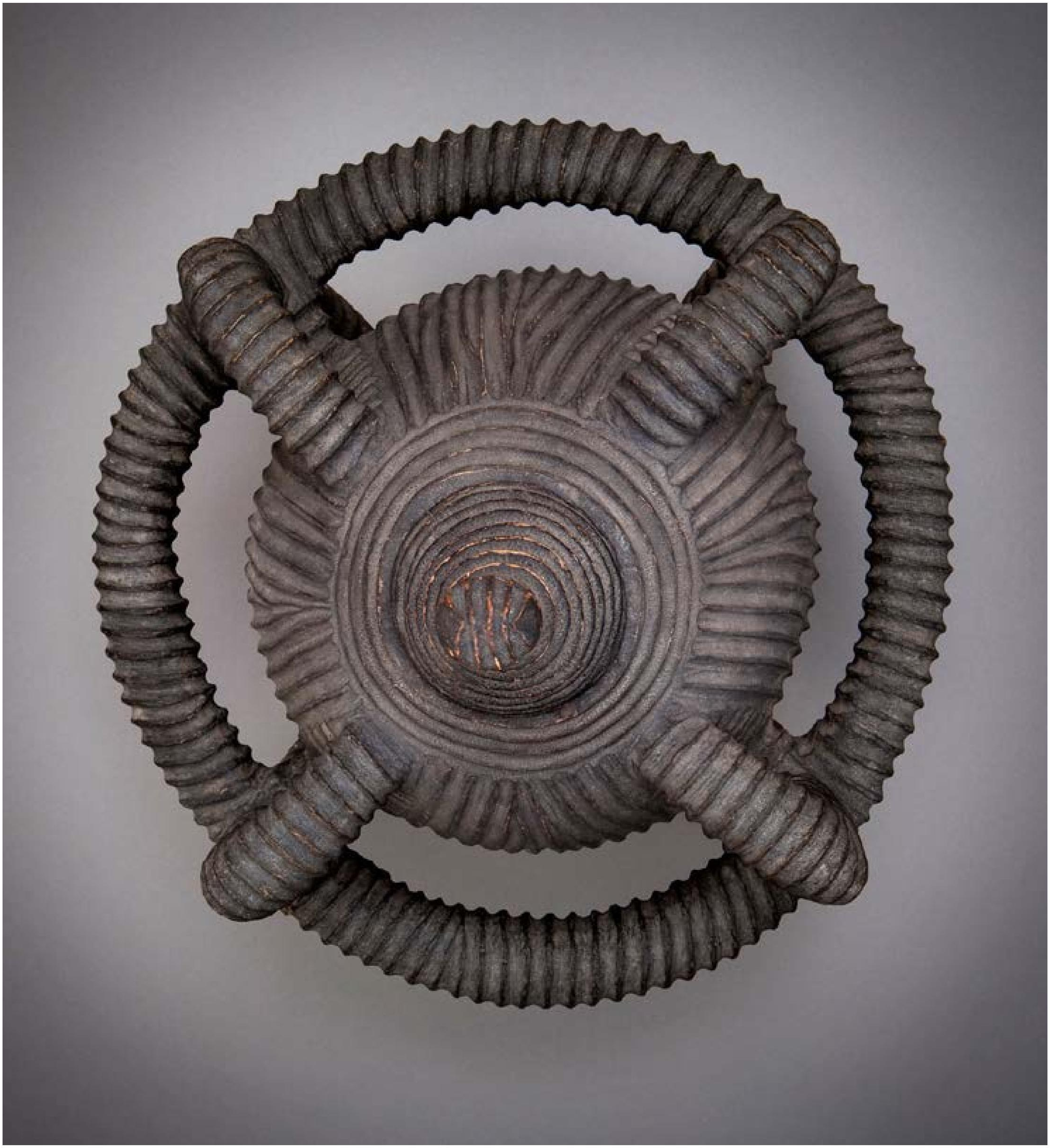
ZULU KINGDOM/COLONY OF NATAL

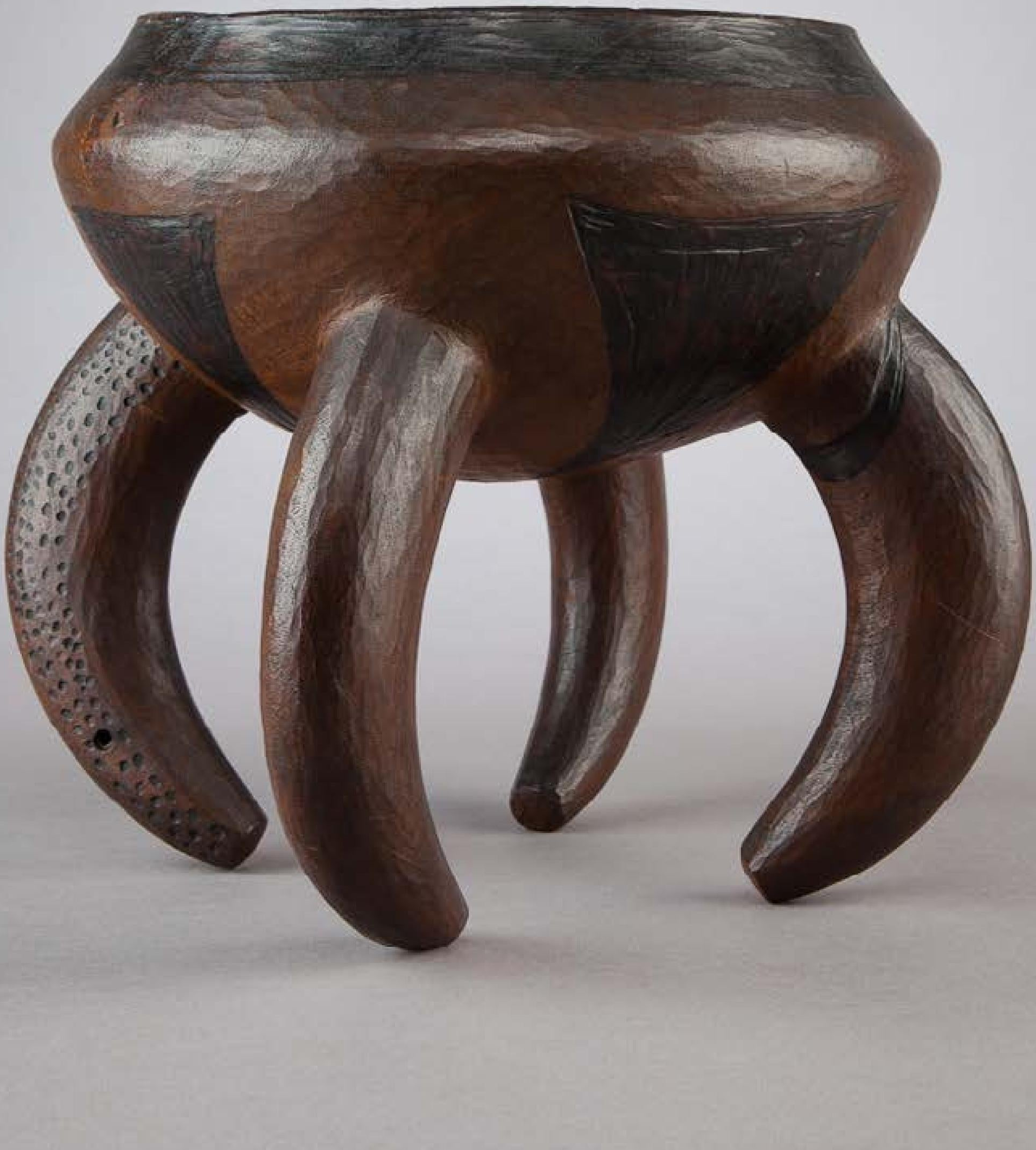
19th century
Wood, pokerwork
Height: 21 in (54 cm)

PROVENANCE
Lotabeg House, Cork, Ireland
Jeremy Sabine, South Africa
Private Collection, USA

Within the known examples of these rare lidded vessels are a number of variations, most likely the result of different carvers producing the same genre of object. One such style includes those such as no. 4 that are encircled by an elaborate external framework. These have three or four U-shaped uprights that stand away from the body, connecting to its top and lower end just below the lid and above the legs. These could be read as four human figures, their 'heads' butting the container where they join and their legs bent so that the container rests on their 'knees.' The horizontal ring becomes an analogy for linked, encircling, arms. This particular style has either three or four legs with one, and sometimes two, horizontal rings as part of the frame around the vessel body. Their entire surface, including the framework and lid, is covered with a parallel ridged and grooved design.

Vessel no. 4 is very similar to three held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) [41] and the one in the Museum of Natural History in Lille, France collected prior to 1850.[42] These five examples are alike in size, design and decoration, and there are some differences such as the shape of the lid, and the length and number of the legs. However lidded vessels come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. An example with two top openings rather than one, each capped with a lid,[43] is held by the British Museum. It was bequeathed in 1865 by English banker and collector Henry Christy and there is a strong possibility he bought it from the 1862 International Exhibition in London. A notable example is also held in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (2013.165a, b) that has the familiar superstructure with four legs, matching uprights and one ring encircling its body. However, it is different to the previous examples in that its body is more upright, with a hemispherical lid and lower end so that it resembles a capsule. It is topped with a semi-circular handle as part of its lid.





5

BOWL WITH CURVED LEGS

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

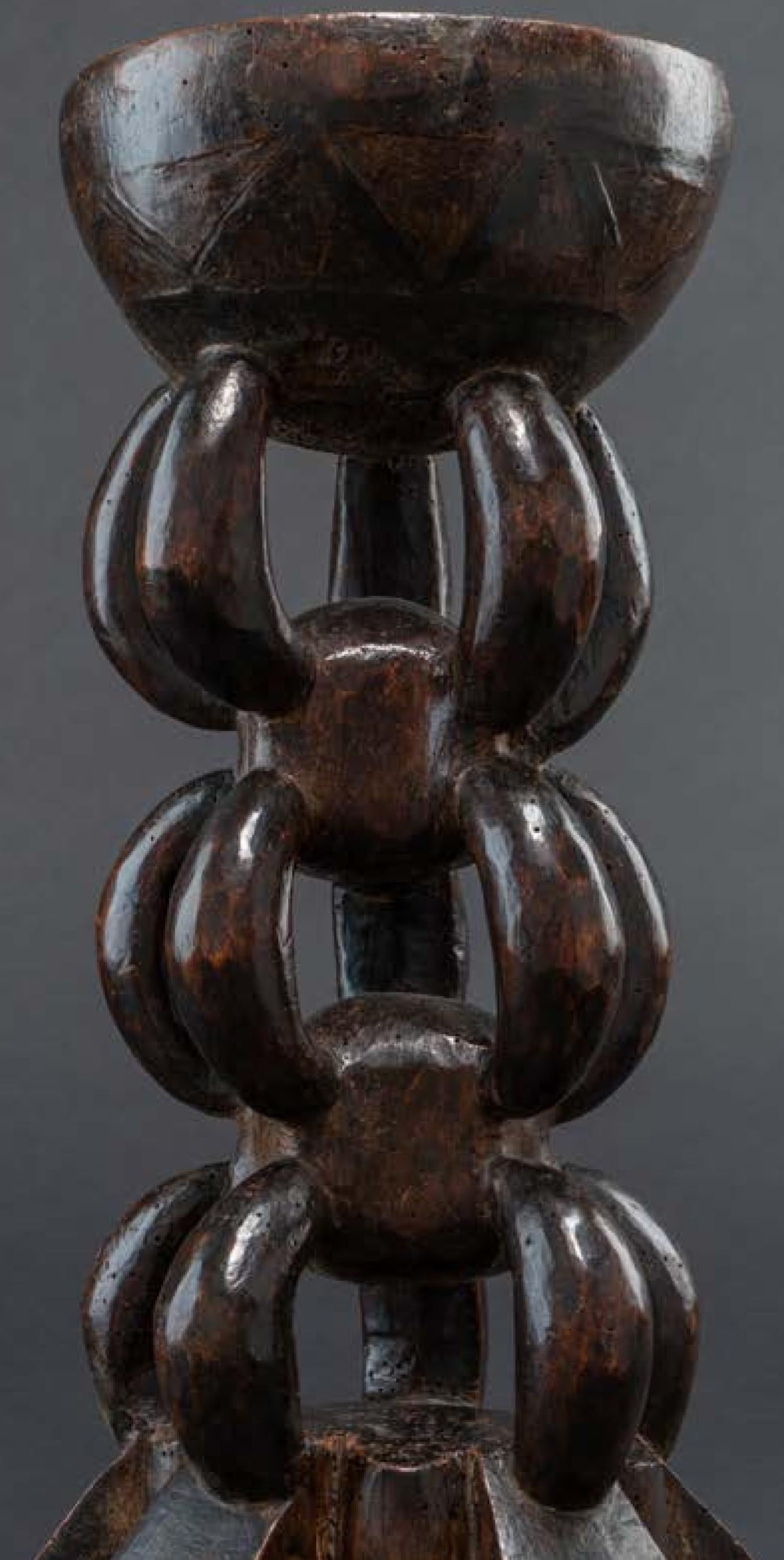
Sotho-speaking regions of southern Africa
19th century
Wood, pokerwork
Height: 10 in; Width 10 in (25.2 cm c 25.2 cm)

PROVENANCE
Jonathan Lowen, London
Bowmint Collection, South Africa
Baltimore Museum of Art

PUBLICATION HISTORY
Relics of War pp 220–1

This poised vessel is supported by four horn-like legs that curve outwards, downward, and inwards. A visual 'conceit,' or skeumorph, the vessel reflects design cues from pottery rather than the carved wood from which it is made. This is an idiosyncrasy seen in a number of other wood-carved objects from the southern African region.

The elevated nature of the vessel, the horn-like legs, and the concentric circle design at the base of the bowl are an uncommon combination and may indicate a special ceremonial purpose for the object. The circle design punctuating the lowest point of the bowl occurs on divining dice (*hakata*) from the northern regions of South Africa and Zimbabwe, particularly amongst Venda and Shona speakers. These are part of a symbolic language that centers around a pool of water, its mystical status as the place where all life originated and of powerful crocodile and python totemic beings. The descending triangular design on the sides of the bowl is reminiscent of a broad aesthetic frequently seen decorating ceramics pottery and wood-carved objects from the north-central parts of southern Africa and Botswana.[44] The reddish brown and black external coloring also indicates a possible origin in the wide Sotho-speaking cultural domain.



6

RAISED BOWL ON TIERED SUPPORT

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

SOUTHEAST AFRICA, POSSIBLY TSONGA

19th century

Wood, pokerwork

Height: 16 ½ in; Width: 7 ½ in (41.91 cm x 19.05 cm)

PROVENANCE

Honolulu Academy of the Arts

(Fulwider Collection)

William Moore, Los Angeles.

Jonathan Lowen, London.

The Conru Collection, Brussels.

Private Collection, USA

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 78, 190 no 24

Africa: The Art of a Continent, p. 228 No 3.46

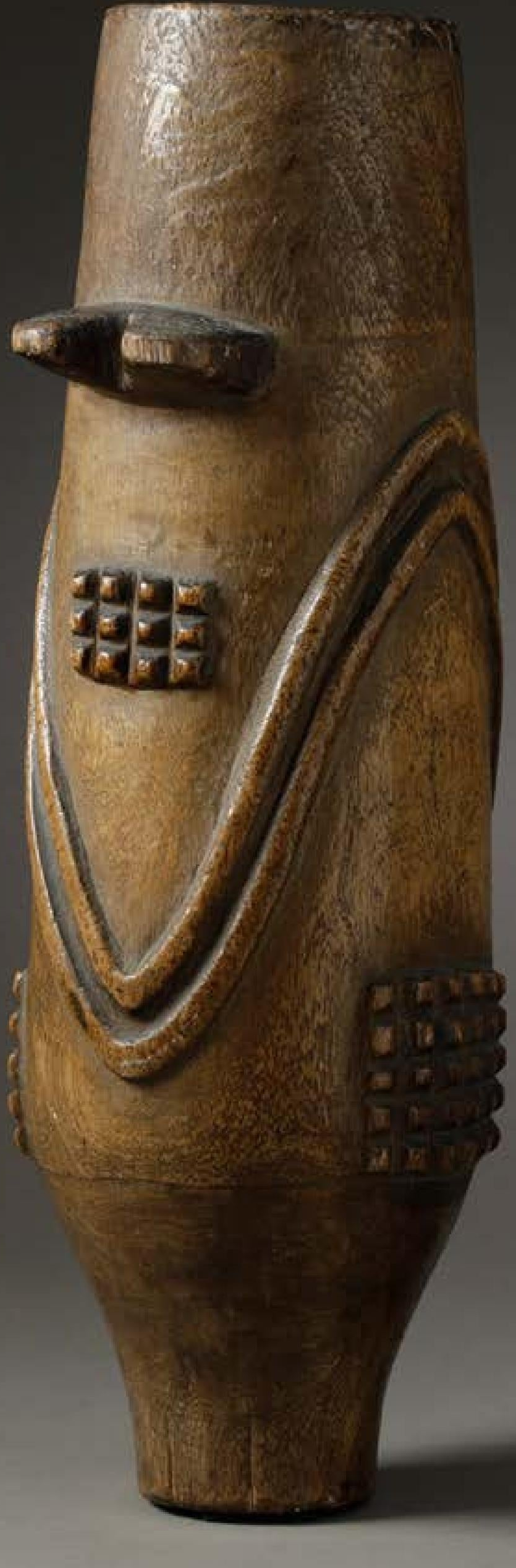
African Furniture and Household Objects, p. 189

This complex, extravagant, vessel has three vertically-arranged tiers, each consisting of five semi-circular loops that narrow at either end and widen at their centre, forming a hollow pillar around a central shaft that supports a deep bowl at its pinnacle. The base is made up of five feet-like projections that stabilize the structure, each aligning with one of the vertical columns of loops. Two spheres are 'suspended' in the hollow centre of the inner core – the first 'held' by the tops of the first tier loops and the bottoms of the second and the second sphere by the tops of the second tier loops and the bottoms of the third. These loops, their 'holding' and 'supporting' function suggest leg/arm visual analogies as discussed on page 8.

The complicated interplay of positive and negative solids and voids with the two suspended spheres in the centre of the column reveal not just a technical virtuosity in the ability to carve complex interlacing shapes, but an ingenious conception of the object itself and its function in the world. The elevated status of the bowl may indicate that it held special substances or was used by an important person.

No information is available about its early origins and so its provenance is based on appearance, design and decorative features. Given its animate shape and the band of triangles zig-zagging around the circumference of the bowl make it a likely candidate for a south-east African provenance. A British Museum object, classified as a 'Stand,'[45] and identified as southern African, has a similar, yet simpler, configuration. Also without secure provenance, the museum records suggest possible Zulu, Chopi, Tsonga or Sotho origins. The sense of playfulness and anthropomorphic quirkiness may suggest a closer identification with a carver from north-east southern Africa or Mozambique.

In the 1940s this raised bowl formed part of the Irma Fulwider collection at the Honolulu Museum of Art and was deaccessioned some time before the 1980s.[46] It was featured in Roy Sieber's book *African Furniture and Household Objects* published in 1980 [47] and thereafter is documented as being part of the William Moore Collection in Los Angeles and subsequently owned by Jonathan Lowen, London and then Kevin Conru, Brussels.



7

MILK PAIL

VERNACULAR: *ITHUNGA*

NORTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL (ZULU KINGDOM REGION)

19th–20th century
Wood
Height: 18 ½ in; Width 6 ¼in (46.99 cm x 15.88 cm)

PROVENANCE

Bonhams, London.
The Conru Collection, Brussels
Private Collection, Belgium

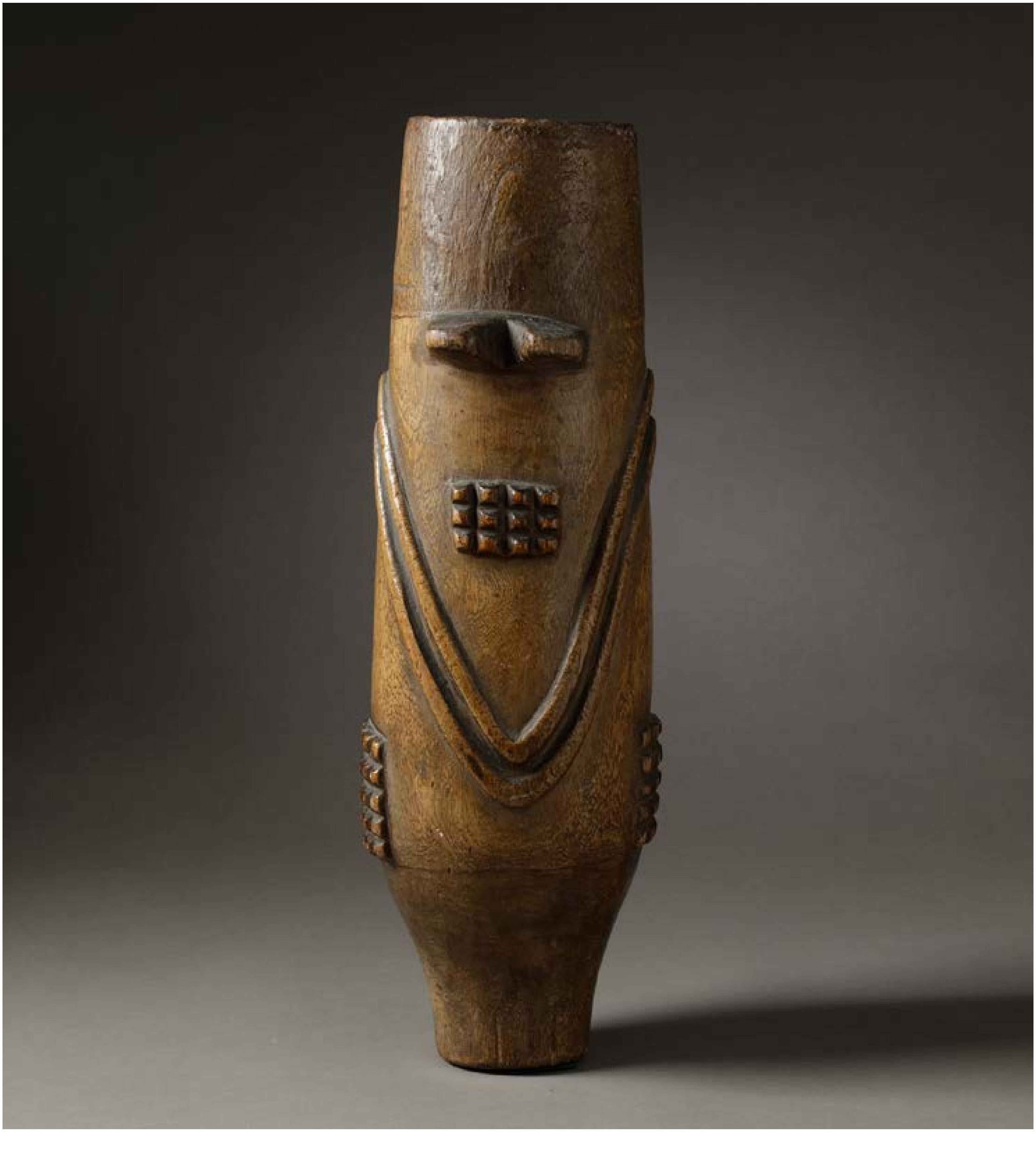
PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 71, 187 no 18

This milk pail (*ithunga*) with its tall, svelte form, is suggestive of the nubile female body, a sense heightened by breast-shaped lugs positioned in the upper third of the vessel. The raised rectangular fields of 'bumps' (*amasumpa*) on what could be considered the hips and upper abdominal region of the form are reminiscent of the scarification that adorned women's bodies in the past. These are linked to the same motif on some pottery objects and other types of carved objects from Zulu-speaking communities.

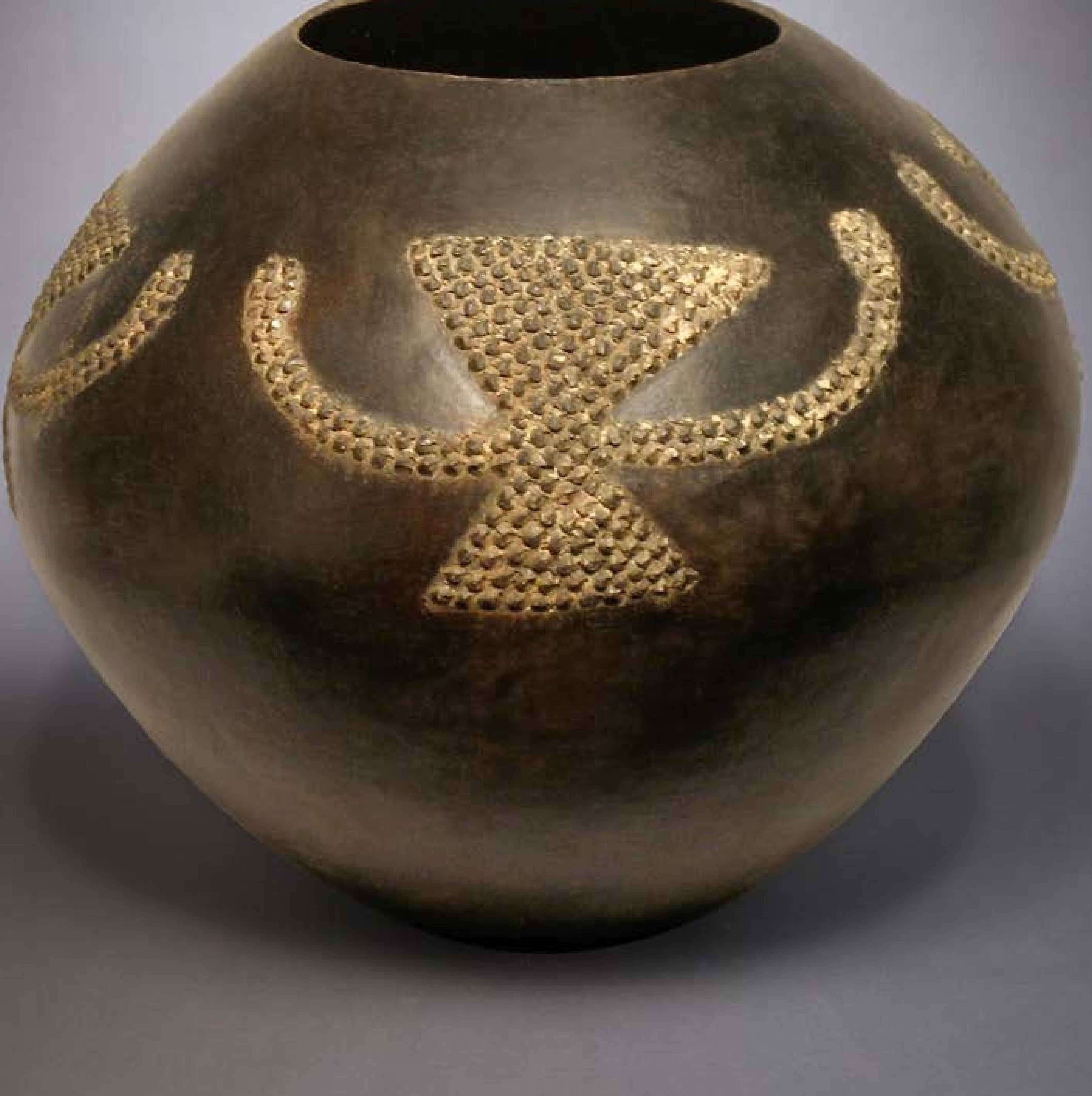
Elegant and cylindrical, this vessel swells gently outwards from its narrow foot, reaching its broadest dimension at one quarter of its height from where it tapers inwards towards its upper rim. It was carved by men and used mainly by young boys who milked the cows seated on a low stool. The pail would be grasped firmly between their knees and the sacred white liquid directed into its narrow opening. The projecting lugs in the upper quarter of the form provided the knees with a secure hold, as did the textured surface of the container.

When full, it was carried above the head in respect to the ancestors and so that no dirt could contaminate it. The milk was decanted into gourd or skin containers kept in the female area of the homestead where women oversaw its fermentation into *amasi*, similar to yogurt or cottage cheese, a staple food. Milk in its raw state was seldom consumed.



VESSELS FROM CLAY

While pottery vessels used for brewing and drinking beer continue to be made in southern Africa and can still be acquired from rural potters, those that held water, were used for cooking, and for other domestic purposes, have now been largely replaced by plastic and metal containers. It may be that it is inappropriate to drink beer from anything other than a receptacle made from sacred earth and water, embodied with ancestral connections.



8

BEER VESSEL

VERNACULAR: *UKHAMBA*

HLABISA/NONGOMA REGION, KWAZULU-NATAL

Potter: possibly Emmelina Khumalo
20th century
Low-fired earthenware clay with blackened surface
Height: 16 ½ in; Diameter: 19 in (41.9 cm x 48.3 cm)

PROVENANCE
Kevin Conru, Brussels
Bill Simmons, Mexico

This beer vessel (*ukhamba*) made from fired clay, with its sides swelling gently upwards and outwards at an approximately 45-degree angle, shifts direction at midsection, curving round to narrow at a similar angle, ending in a simple rim. The body has been blackened so that it will find favour with the ancestral shades who are drawn to its dark surface and the sacred liquid that filled its interior.

Circling the upper half of the vessel are hourglass motifs with extended 'arms' constituted through raised bumps (*amasumpa*) that contrast with the smooth, burnished and blackened vessel body. This visual and tactile difference is heightened by a white residue caught between the raised bumps. The repeated design may be a modification of an older geometric motif which has mutated to resemble a human figure.[48]

This particular vessel shows a marked similarity to a vessel featured in Frank Jolles' *Zulu Beer Vessels in the Twentieth Century.*[49] Jolles records that the vessel was made by Emmelina Khumalo (b *c*1923) who lived in eMgovuso, Hlabisa in the north east region of KwaZulu-Natal. Hlabisa lies in the heartland of the old Zulu Kingdom with the Phongola River to the north and the Thukela River to the south.

The maker of the vessel mentioned above may have made this one but it could also have been a close female relative as pottery was a specialist skill and particular families were well known for their vessel styles. Like others in the region, it is possible that they sold their pottery at the monthly Mona cattle market, 37.5 km to the north west. People from nearby rural communities, as well as distant urban cities, still come to the market to buy not only cattle, but other necessities such as the products of potters, wood carvers and hide crafters, as well as plants and medicines from herbal traders.

9

BEER VESSEL

VERNACULAR: *INGCUNGU/ UKHAMBA*

HLABISA REGION, KWAZULU-NATAL

Potter: Mncane Nzuza

20th century

Low fired earthenware clay with burnished surface

Height: 27 in; Diameter 23 in (68.6 cm x 58.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Dave Roberts, South Africa

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Constellations: Studies in African Art, Neuberger Museum of Art, p23

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Neuberger Museum of Art, 2008

This uncommonly shaped vessel is thought to come from the Hlabisa region. Its appearance is somewhat like a flattened sphere with a ratio of height to diameter of 1: 1 ½, unlike the more common containers which have dimensions of height to width ratio of 1:1 or 1:1 ¼ . Greater technical skill is needed to make this shape compared to the commoner type and it is also more delicate to use. Jack Grossert, Inspector of Arts and Crafts for Bantu Education in mid 20th century South Africa, has referred to it as an *ingcungu* but without any explanation as to its unusual shape.[50]

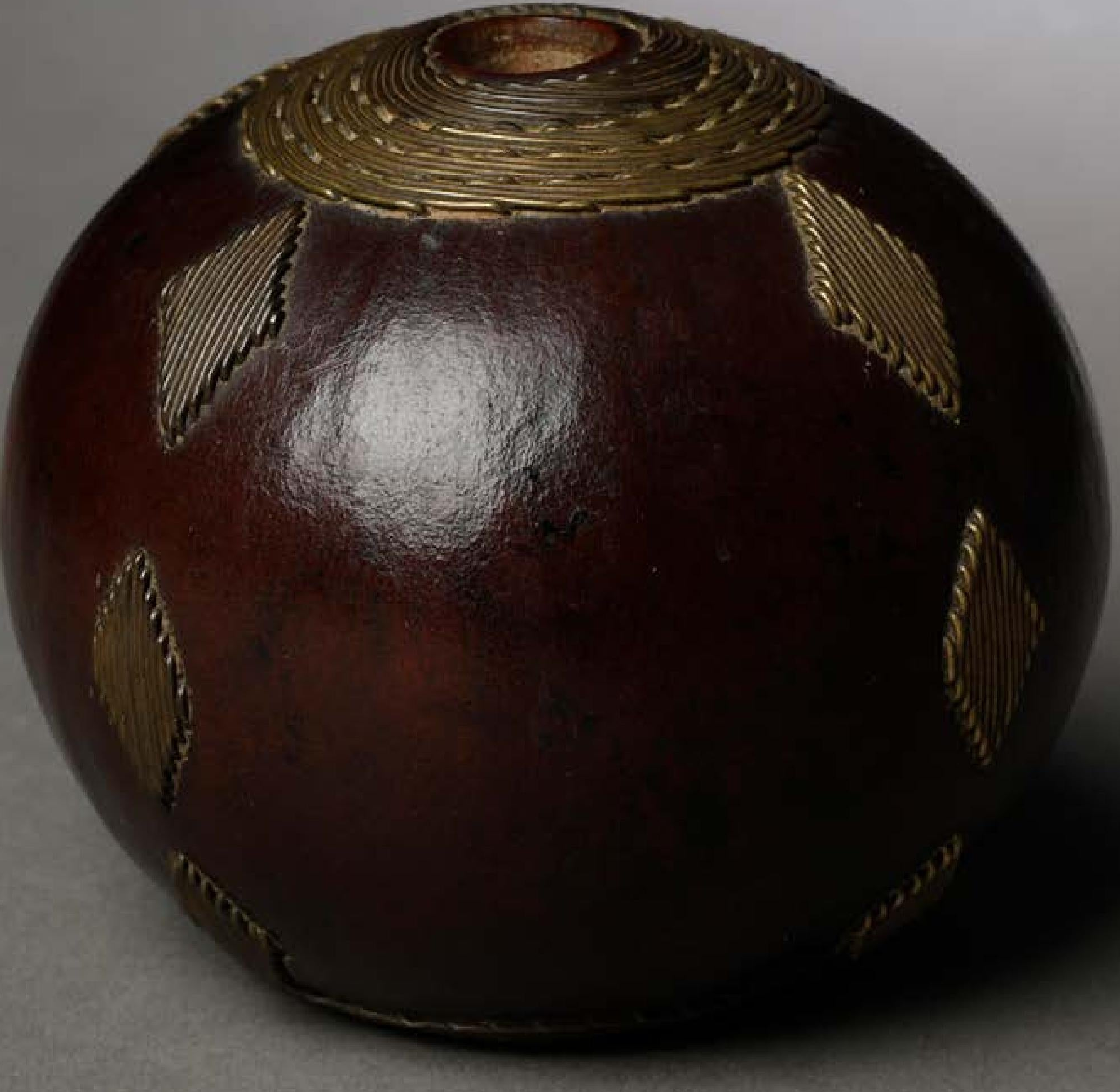
Its outer surface of a rich dark and reddish brown sheen is decorated with a 'V' shaped motif with a zigzag line across its wider upper end. The interior of this 'V' is filled in with a shallow criss-cross pattern most likely achieved by dragging an item such as a comb across the clay surface before it had completely dried. This type of decorative mark and the unusual vessel shape appear to be a 20th century introduction and were well established by the 1960s.[51]

SNUFF CONTAINERS IN VARIOUS MEDIA

Snuff-taking was enjoyed by African communities throughout southern Africa. After grinding, large quantities were stored either loose in calabashes or in a compacted dried form. For everyday use, snuff was decanted into a diverse array of small receptacles made from materials including used cartridge cases, nut casings, gourds, tough fruit shells, moth cocoons, hide, wood, reed, horn, sheep or goat testicles, bottles and imported tins. All offered ingenious solutions for diminutive repositories.

Some receptacles are long and phallic shaped, others are rotund and still others amphora-shaped. However, there is not enough information to say whether these diverse shapes were gender specific as both men and women used snuff. Their compact scale meant they were portable, allowing their owners to carry them wherever they went. Some were tucked into a waistband (nos. 14 and 15); others were suspended from the neck by means of a cord, string of beads or leather thong (nos. 10, 11 and 12); long narrow ones could be worn through a hole in the lobe of the ear (no. 12) and still others were suspended from a tassel hung from the belt (no. 13); those with long tines (no. 16) could be pushed through the hair, and occasionally containers were carried in a bag (nos. 19 and 20). The carved finial of some staffs were ingeniously fashioned to incorporate snuff containers as part of the form (nos. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26) creating a multi-use object.

All were objects of pride, displayed at social occasions and accompanying their owners whenever he or she was out and about. If the user could afford it, a small, finely carved snuff spoon made from bone, horn, wood, or ivory for ladling out portions of snuff would form part of the assemblage.



10

SPHERICAL SNUFF CONTAINER WITH INLAY

VERNACULAR: *IDLELO/ISHUNGU*

NATAL-PONDOLAND BORDER/ COLONY OF NATAL

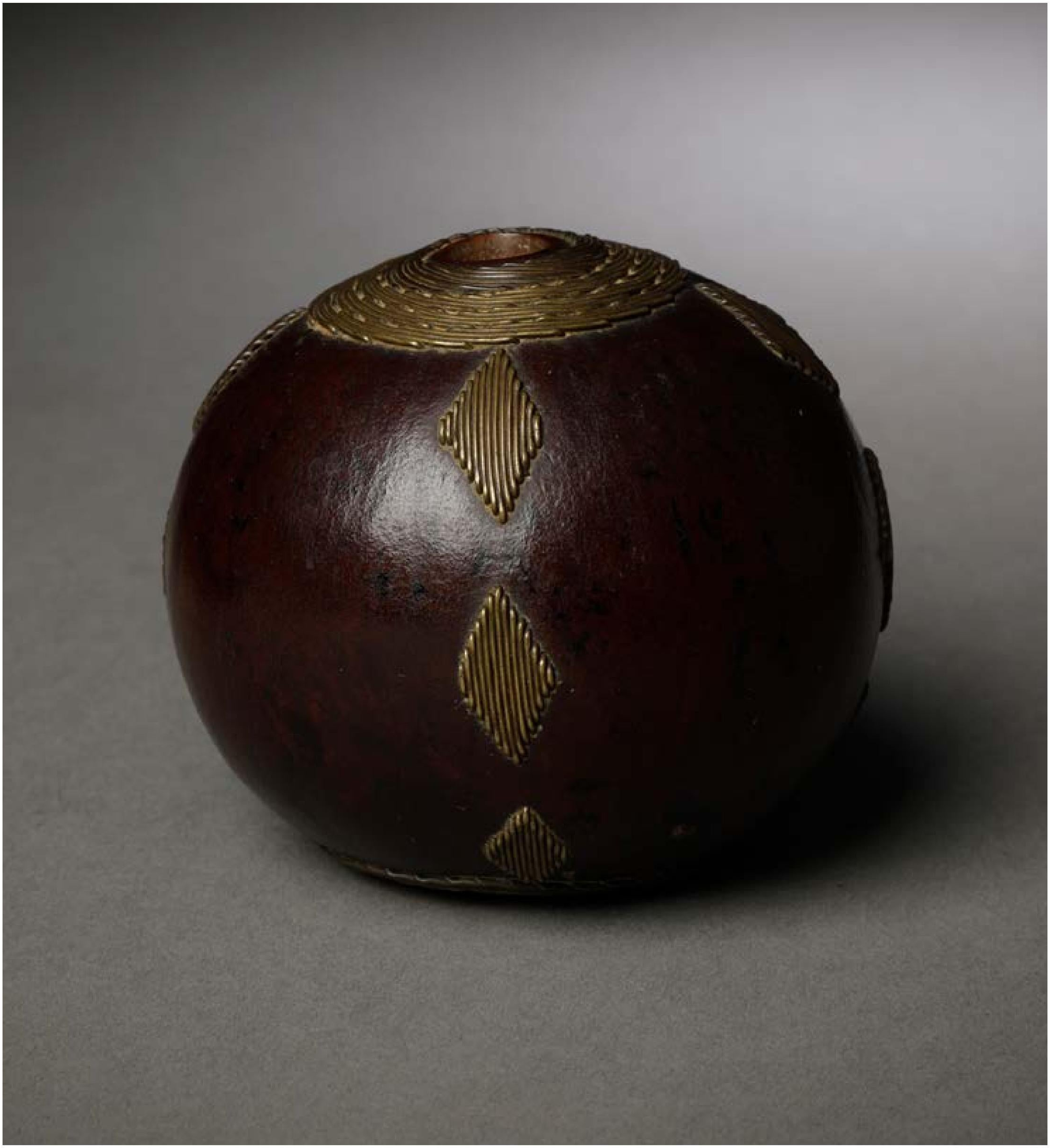
19th – early 20th centuries
Plant material (gourd), copper and brass wire inlay
Height: 2 ½ in; Width 3 in (6.35 cm x 7.62 cm)

PROVENANCE
Hubert Goldet, Paris
de Ricqlès Auctioneers, Paris, France "Arts Primitifs, Collection Hubert Goldet", 30 June – 1 July, 2001. Lot 342.
Axis Gallery, New Jersey

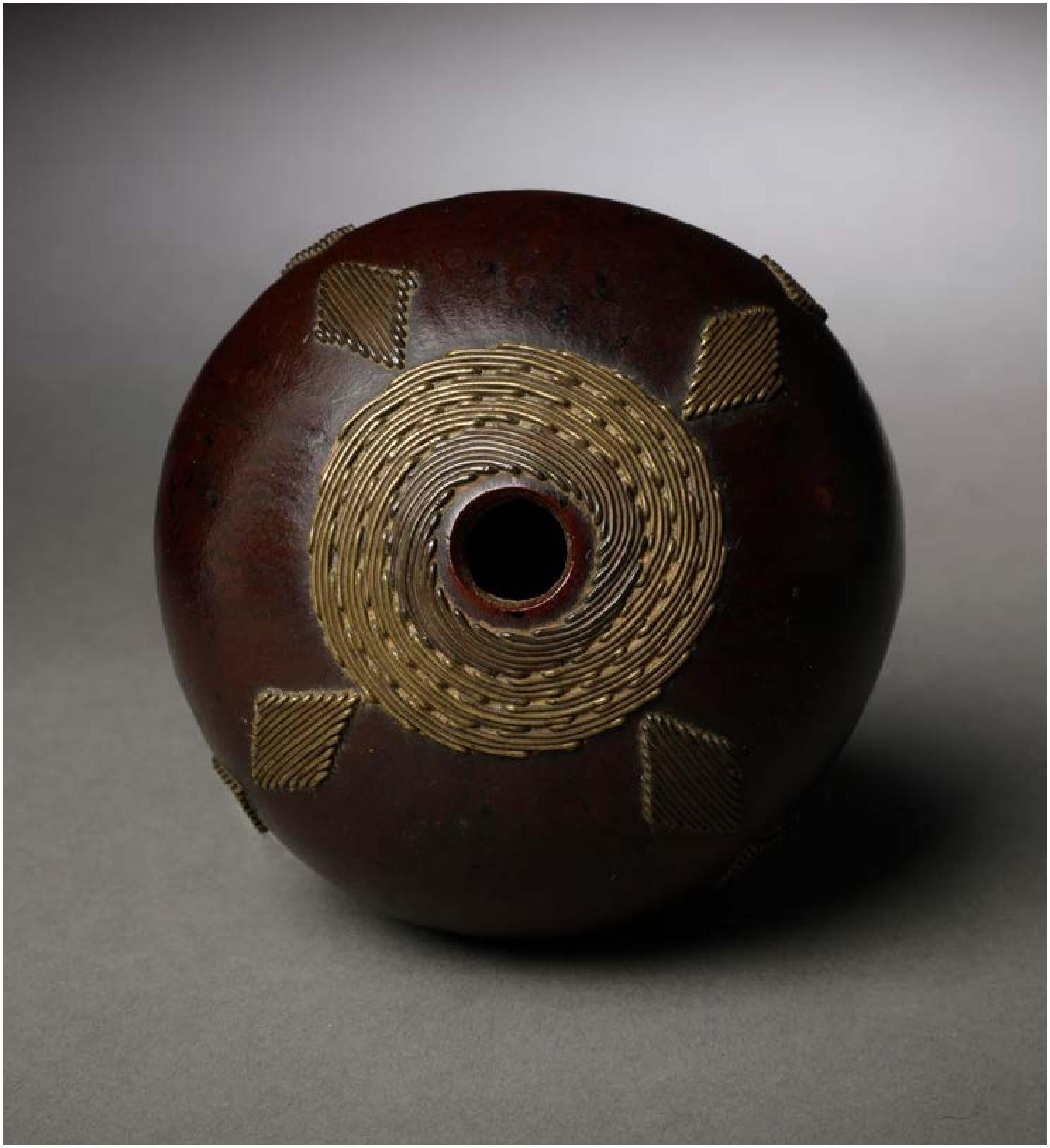
This spherical container[52] made from a small gourd[53] has a high polish, giving the surface a silky sheen and its globe-like body has been expertly decorated with inlaid wire. A wide band of copper strands, and one of brass, create two concentric circles around its opening. Its sides are embellished with triangles formed by the same inlay technique. The metallic shine and faceted, raised surface of the wire contrasts with the smooth, dark, and glossy surface of the gourd body and must have given much pleasure when touched and handled.

Some gourds were left plain, others engraved, hatched, or decorated using a pyrogravure technique that saw patterns burnt into the surface. Still others were embellished with beadwork and, like in this example, neat strands of copper and brass wire inlay, creating geometric or botanical motifs.[54] This decoration was achieved by first cutting the wire to the desired lengths. Each end was then inserted into small holes that had been pre-bored into the gourd shell with an iron point.[55] The ends were left unfinished inside the gourd as the opening is too small to be able to fasten them in any other way.

This particular form of snuff container, with and without its wire embellishments, is found throughout the KwaZulu-Natal region with museum curator Margaret Shaw placing many at the Natal-Pondoland border and others in Zululand.[56] There are a few photographs of these gourds in the Van Warmelo archive at the University of Johannesburg which he provenanced to Natal in the area below the Thukela River (which was the British Colony of Natal from 1843 to 1910). A similar calabash snuff container found in the Zambezi River region by Müller and Snelleman is decorated with engraved and hatched triangles and squares[57] and suggests a wide-spread use for this type of container.



SPHERICAL SNUFF CONTAINER WITH INLAY



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11

SNUFF CONTAINER

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Late 19th century

Horn

Height: 2 3/8 in (6.03 cm)

PROVENANCE

Michael Graham Stewart, London.

Marc and Denyse Ginsberg, New York.

Sheik bin Mohammed al-Thani, Qatar and London

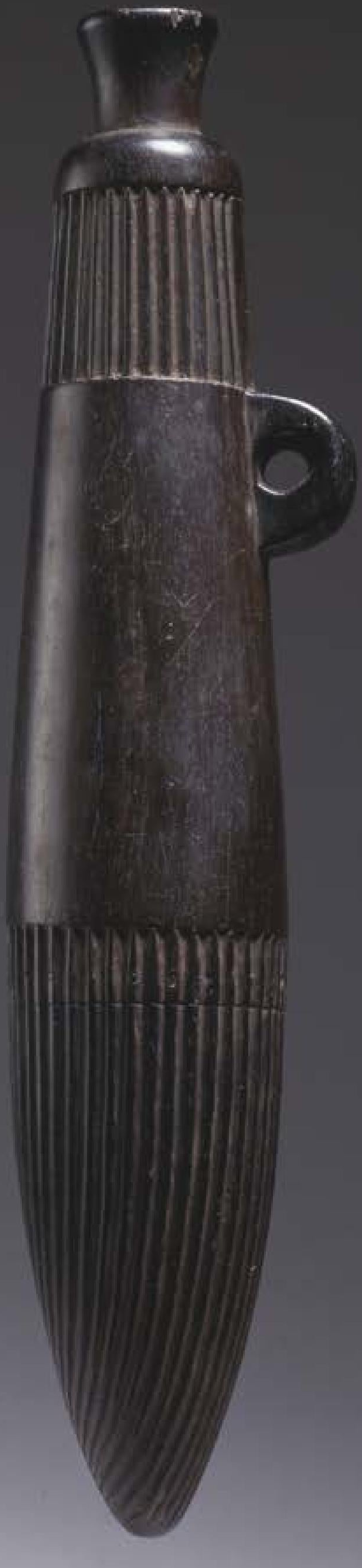
Private collection, Europe

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Africa: Relics of the Colonial Era, Anthony Jack, 1991, (back cover)

African Forms, Marc Ginsberg, 2000, p 117

This snuff container is a flawlessly-executed ovoid with smooth, evenly-faceted sides – an outstanding example of the refined, abstract style seen in many objects from southern Africa. Its lustrous, dark, chamfered surface recalls a seed-like shape. Fashioned from animal horn, it is both a pleasure for the eye and a tactile delight when handled. Balanced on a slightly truncated base, matched at its top end by a similarly flattened surface, and sealed with a small hemispherical stopper, the final silhouette is one of consummate elegance. A small aperture halfway down one side (not visible in the image) has been drilled, through which a cord or thong was threaded so that it could be worn around the neck. Beyond its southern African provenance it is a challenge to pin-point a more precise place of origin.



12

SNUFF CONTAINER

VERNACULAR: *XIDZAHELO* (XITSONGA)

VATSONGA/MASHONA/MANYIKA

NORTH-EASTERN REGIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA/ ZIMBABWE/MOZAMBIQUE

19th century
Wood
Height: 9 7/8 in (25.08 cm)

PROVENANCE

David Petty, London
The Conru Collection, Brussels
Private Collection, Belgium

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 70, 187 no 17.

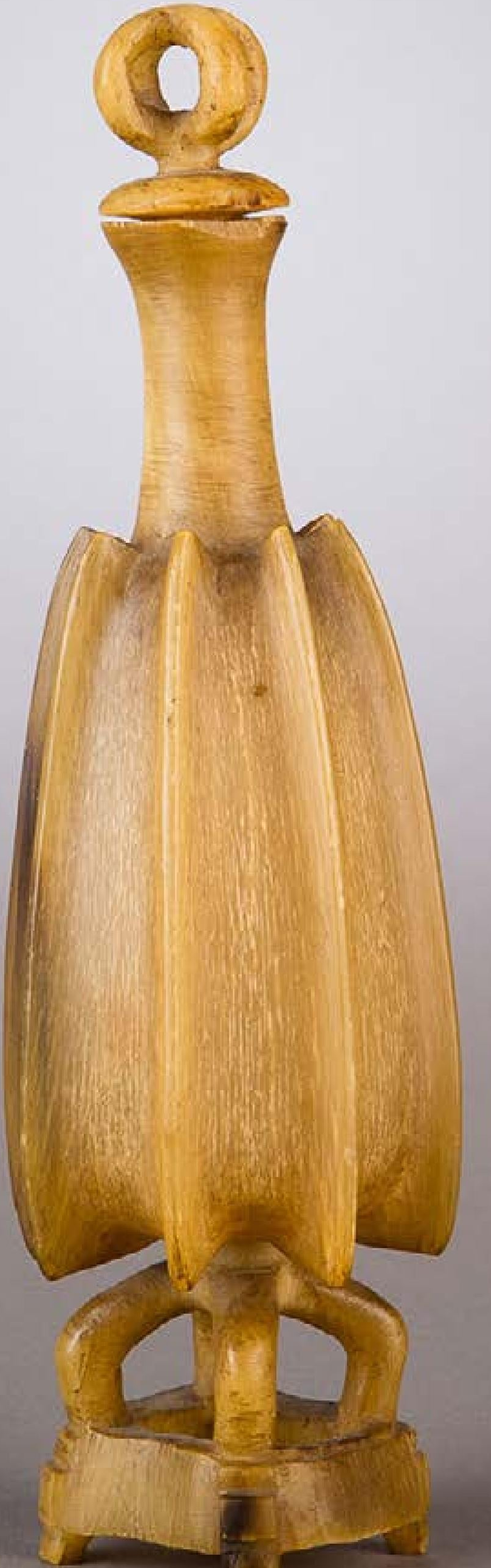
With its dark, lustrous surface and its elegant amphora-like shape, this particularly large carved wooden snuff container is one of the most elegant of its type. The surface is divided up into three sections: the lower third, rising from its pointed base, is covered with a finely grooved and ridged vertical design. The middle third, which contains a small loop allowing it to be attached to a necklace or belt, is smooth and shiny. The last third which, in part repeats the grooved design from below, narrows and flares slightly into the unembellished neck and opening at the top. These elements complement each other in a visual rhythm of graceful shape combined with linear elements against flat planar surfaces in a finely balanced harmony.

A similar elongated ellipsoid-shaped snuff container, illustrated in the *Annals of the South African Museum*[58], is close in length to no. 11. It too has a carved, grooved design across its body and a small semi-circular handle on its upper end. However, it differs from no. 11 in its carved designs and brass wirework around its neck and lower tip. This container is said to be typical of those used by the Manyika of Mashonaland located in the northeast corner of Zimbabwe. An example with vertical ridges and grooves all the way up its body is said to be typical of the Mashona from the Salisbury (now Harare) region of Zimbabwe,[59] as are a further three examples of this type on plate LXXI in the same publication.[60]

In his *Life of a South African Tribe,* Swiss missionary Henri Junod illustrated an amphora-shaped snuff container with a small, looped handle [61] carved from ebony. Its surface design however, while also being grooved and ridged, is in a lattice formation. He identified this container as belonging to a chief named Mavabaze who was, for a time, the head of the Khosa, a sub-group of xiTsonga speakers living in Mozambique, north of Lourenco Marques and south of the Olifants River.

The British Museum has a snuff container that resembles the ones discussed above but it has a wider, rounder end that narrows to the top with the neck flaring slightly to its opening. Donated by Dora Earthy who worked as a missionary and anthropologist in Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) in the first half of the 20th century, she identified it as coming from Beira, at the mouth of the Pungwe River 300km east of Mutare in central Zimbabwe.[62]

A geographical spread, rather than a ‘tribal’ identification is possibly more suitable for the understanding of the origins of these elegant and finely-carved containers. They seem to originate in the north eastern regions of South Africa, with examples found as far as the eastern side of Zimbabwe and in Mozambique.



13

FLANGED SNUFF CONTAINER

VERNACULAR: *ISIGQOBHELA* (SESOTHO)

POSSIBLY BASOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA

Late 19th century

Horn

Height: 6 in (15.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Alain Guisson, Brussels

Michael Graham Stewart, London

Terence Pethica Collection, UK

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Africa Relics of the Colonial Era, Anthony Jack, 1991, p 21

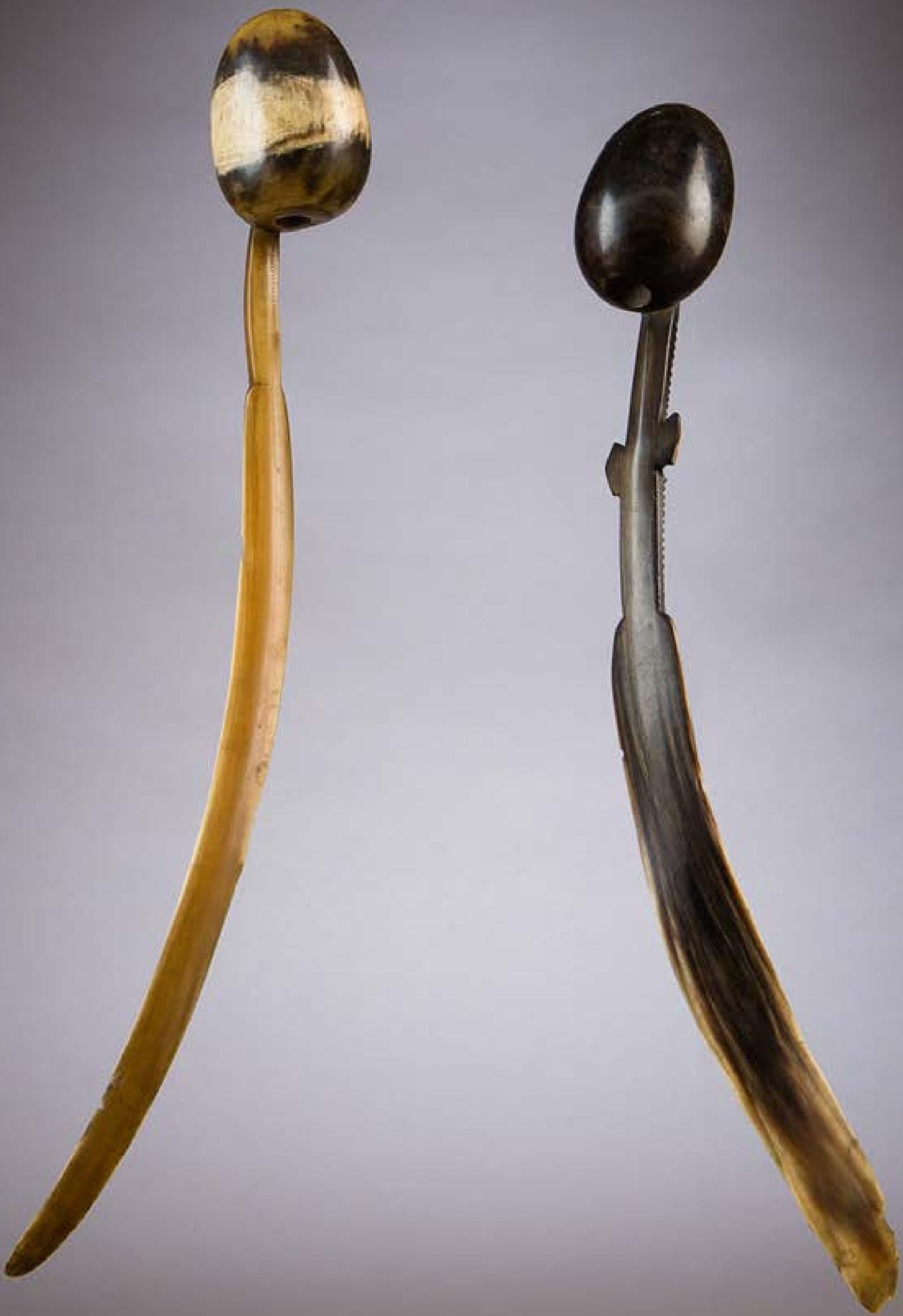
The Art of Southern Africa, Klopper, Nettleton, Pethica, p 164

This flanged snuff container, perched on a small circlet with four little feet and four small legs bent as if ready to leap up, leans slightly to one side. It seems ready to take off like some winged insect or a seed pod caught in a gust of wind. Two interlinked rings at the apex of the form make an attractive finial for the stopper. While the flanged body is a frequently seen form in southern African horn snuff containers, the circlet at its base is unusual but not exceptional. There is a similar container with four feet connected to a circular base in the British Museum dated to 1800–1899. Unfortunately, no provenance is available for it.[63]

More secure provenance comes from the South African Museum that holds a flanged snuff container in its collection, closely resembling this example but without a base or legs. It has a ring of horn at its broad base end and one as part of its stopper. Classified as Basuto, it has been illustrated with its narrow neck pointing downwards, suggesting that the vessel was carried hanging down.[64] Field collector Gordon Crawford has documented a number of similarly flanged snuff containers from Eswatini (Swaziland) that are carried fastened to the end of a decorative tassel attached to a belt. These all have their narrow necks and openings pointing downwards.[65]

Amongst government ethnographer NJ Van Warmelo's papers, held at the University of Johannesburg, is a photograph of a flanged snuff container with a U-shaped extension at its base. He identified this as coming from the Ingwavuma region of South Africa, bordering on Eswatini and Mozambique. Müller and Snelleman, the late 19th century travellers who published a book on the material culture and people they came across in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland illustrated one such snuff container.[66] It was collected somewhere in the basin of the Zambezi River that flows through Zimbabwe to the east coast, exiting into the Indian Ocean near Quelimane, Mozambique. This is also depicted in an inverted position, with a reed stopper at the lower end and an attached looped cord at the upper end.

With evidence of provenance stretching all the way from Lesotho to Swaziland and the Zambezi River basin, this style of snuff container will need further research to establish whether this spread is accounted for by people moving from place to place, a wide and popular style, or simply because of unreliable record keeping.



14 and 15

SNUFF CONTAINERS WITH SINGLE LONG TINE OR TAILS

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

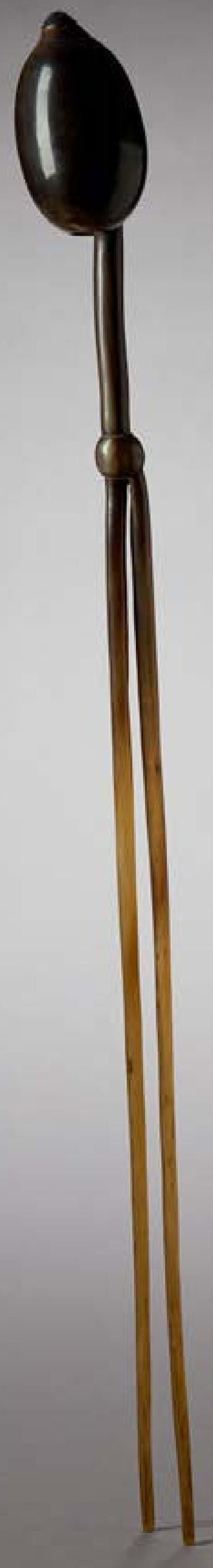
BASOTHO, LESOTHO; EASTERN CAPE
(PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

19th century
Horn
Height: 12 ¼ in (31.1 cm)

PROVENANCE
Private Collection, UK
Adam Prout, London
Private Collection, USA

The snuff boxes nos. 14 and 15 with their ovoid finials and flowing tails are almost identical to four in the World Museum Rotterdam.[67] These all have a single, undivided 'tail' or tine. A slender, narrower finial with a 'tail' divided into multiple prongs such as no. 16 is a more common form and has been provenanced to regions as widely spread as Lesotho, Natal and Mozambique.[68] Three similar, but not identical items are included in the *Annals of the South African Museum* Vol. 24 and provenanced as Basuto.[69] These 'tails' were tucked into a waistband or, in the case of pointed versions, especially those with multiple tines, were worn pushed through the hair. The end of the tail of no. 17 is flattened into what is likely a strigil or sweat scraper.

The small round bodies of the finials with their elongated 'tails' bring to mind the long-tailed widow bird (*sakabula)*[70] hovering over the veld (grasslands). It is found in many part of the southern sub-continent including Lesotho and South Africa, its feathers used to create the headdresses for warriors in the Natal Colony and possibly further afield. No. 15 has what could be two small wings or arms amplifying a sense of a 'bird or 'human' form. Some examples have finials that have been carved to look like human heads.



16

SNUFF CONTAINER WITH TWO TINES

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

BASOTHO, LESOTHO; EASTERN CAPE (PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

19th century
Horn
Height: 14 in (35.5 cm)

PROVENANCE
Private Collection, UK
Private Collection, Europe

17

SNUFF CONTAINER WITH SINGLE TINE

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

LESOTHO; EASTERN CAPE (PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

19th century

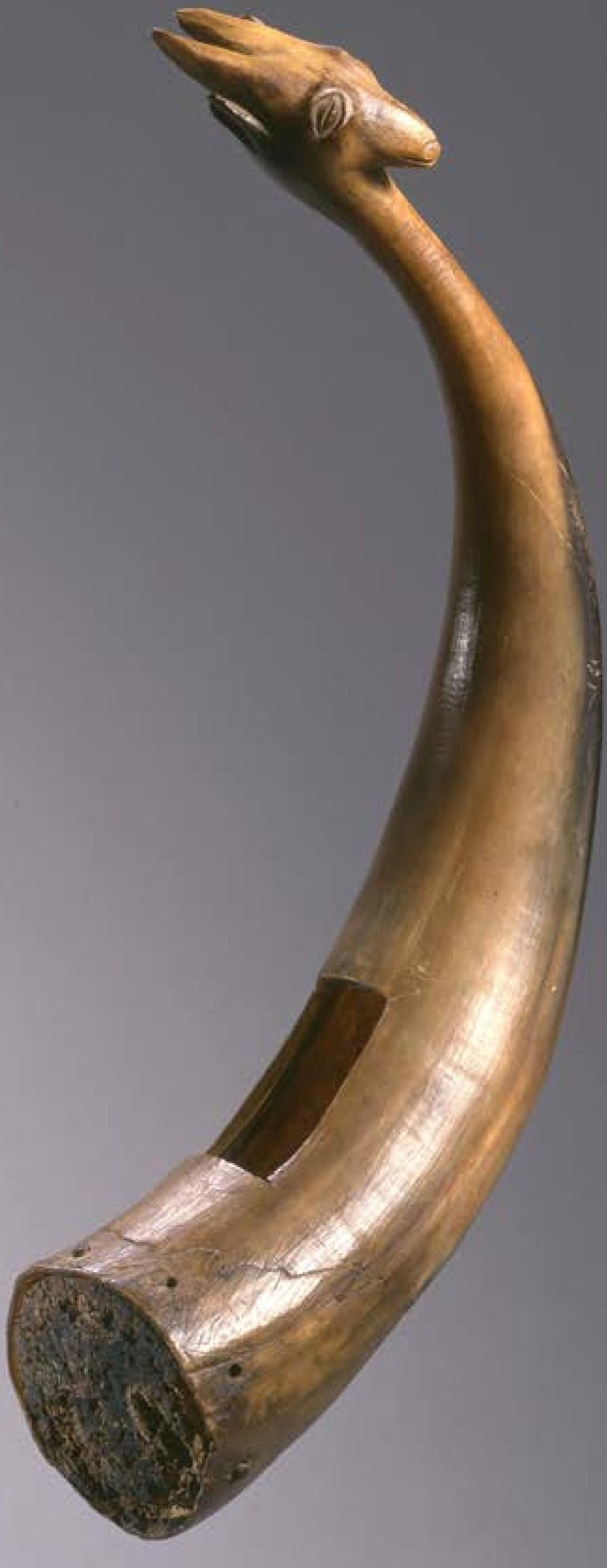
Horn

Height: 14 in (35.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, UK

Private Collection, Europe



18

SNUFF CONTAINER

VERNACULAR: *IQHAGA*

ABATHEMBU, BASOTHO. LESOTHO; EASTERN CAPE (PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

19th century
Horn, wood and metal
Height: 17 in; Width 2 ¾
in (43.18 cm x 6.99 cm)

PROVENANCE
Alain Guisson, Brussels.
The Conru Collection, Brussels.
Private Collection, Belgium

PUBLICATION HISTORY
The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 173, 222 no 108.

The curved, tapering shape of this snuff container, with its chimerical antelope head finial, reflects the original shape of the horn from which it was made. This type and style was typically seen in containers coming from Lesotho but also beyond its south and south-east border, ranging into the Eastern Cape region. The lower end usually became the cavity of the container, and was sealed with a disk of wood or calabash, while the peak was shaped into a number of different configurations. These include abstract geometric forms, stylised human shapes and animal forms, including this example, being the horned head of an antelope.[71]

Shaw has identified these 'antelope' shaped snuff boxes as Tembu[72] and Basuto.[73] One example that closely resembles no. 18 is included in Shaw and Van Warmelo's 1988 publication and is identified as Xesibe from the Mt Ayliff[74] area of what was then the Transkei, now the Eastern Cape.

19

SNUFF BOX

VERNACULAR: *QHAGA LAMANYAMA, IGUZA* (MPONDO)

MFENGU, AMAXHOSA, ABATHEMBU OR MPONDO
(PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

Late 19th-early 20th centuries
Animal parings (hide scrapings, clay and blood mixture)
Height: 3.98 in; Length: 4.5 in (10.1 cm x 11.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Bowmint Collection, South Africa
Karel Nel Collection

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Africa: The Art of a Continent, Royal Academy of Arts, p209;
Guggenheim Museum Publications Department, p 93.
Relics of War, p 73

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Royal Academy of Arts, London, *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, 1995
Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, *Afrika: die Kunst eines Kontinents*, 1996
Guggenheim Museum, New York, *Africa: The Art of a Continent, 100 Works of Power and Beauty*, 1996

These two small, zoomorphic snuff containers nos. 19 and 20 have been molded into the form of a goat and a sheep respectively.[75] The first poised and alert on pointed legs, with head down ready to butt and the other grounded, rotund and heavy. Sometimes in the shape of a domestic animal, and, less frequently, as geometric forms, this type of snuff container was created through an additive process rather than the reductive process of carving. Using the blood and tissue left over after cleaning and scraping a fresh animal skin, this residue was mixed with ochre or powdered clay to make a stiff paste. Spread over a pre-prepared clay model of the desired shape, it was left in the sun to dry. Further modelling such as the shaping of ears, tails, horns, etc., was done when the surface was nearly dried, with an awl used to prick up a rough nap to give the illusion of a hairy coat. When completely dry, a round hole was cut into the outer skin through which the dry clay base was removed. This became the opening for the snuff container and a small stopper was fashioned to close it, securing the contents. Sometimes decorated with beadwork, these boxes were carried in a bag or hung from the waistband by a short thong.

Shaw and Van Warmelo write that the Fingo, Xhosa, Thembu and Mpondo used this technique for making snuff containers up until the end of the 19th century.[76] An example described by Shaw located it to the former Transkei region.[77] One in the Amathole Museum, King Williamstown decorated with beads around its neck and on its stopper, which also serves as the nose of the animal, was collected prior to 1920, and is provenanced as 'Mpondo,' a group living within the borders of the Eastern Cape (previous Transkei) just south of KwaZulu-Natal. It seems as if snuff containers such as these have a localized region of origin in the previous regions of the Transkei and Ciskei, now the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

20

SNUFF BOX

VERNACULAR: *QHAGA LAMANYAMA,IGUZA* (MPONDO)

MFENGU, AMAXHOSA, ABATHEMBU OR MPONDO, EASTERN CAPE (PREVIOUS TRANSKEI AND CISKEI REGIONS)

19th century

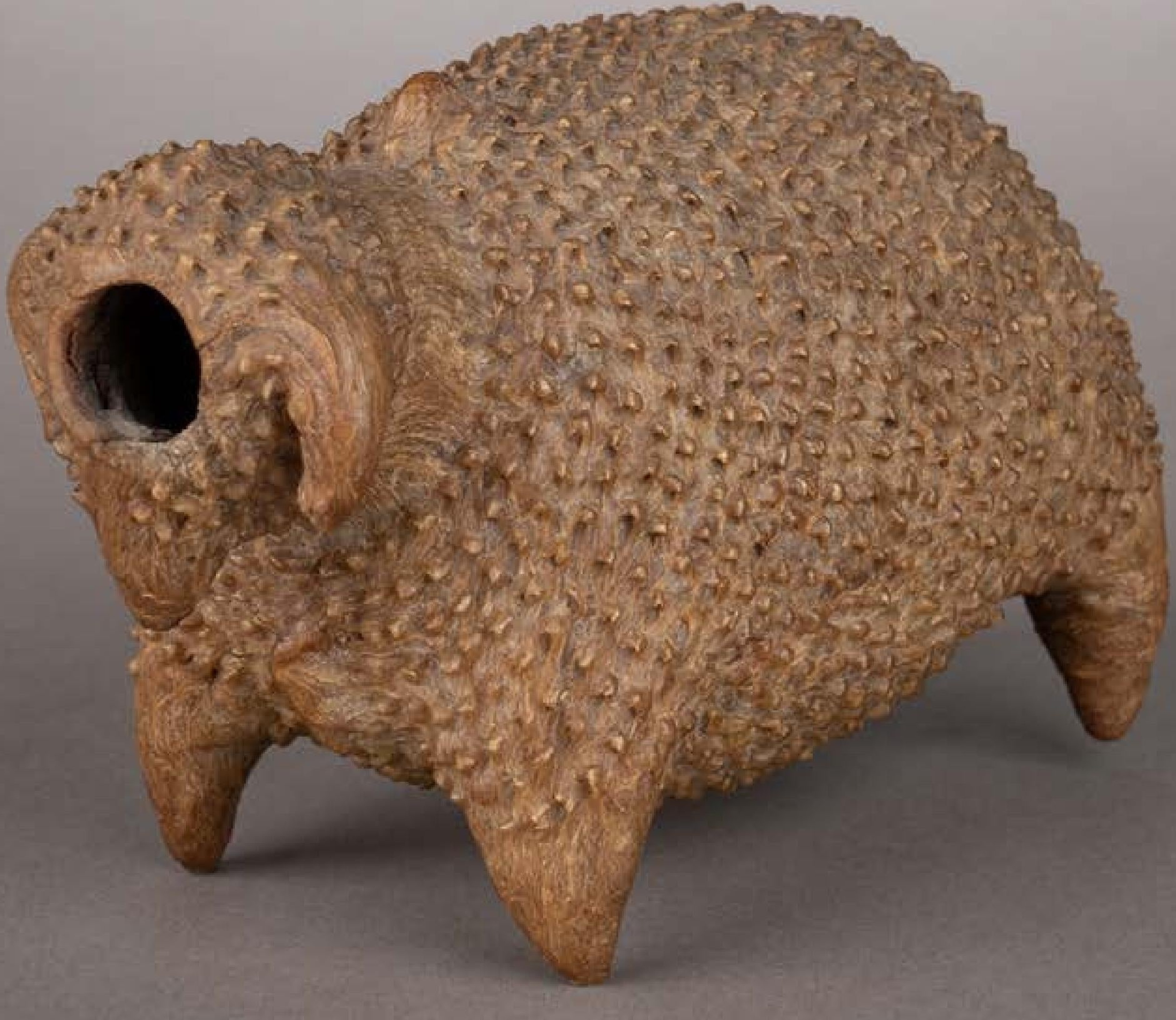
Animal parings (hide scrapings, clay and blood mixture)

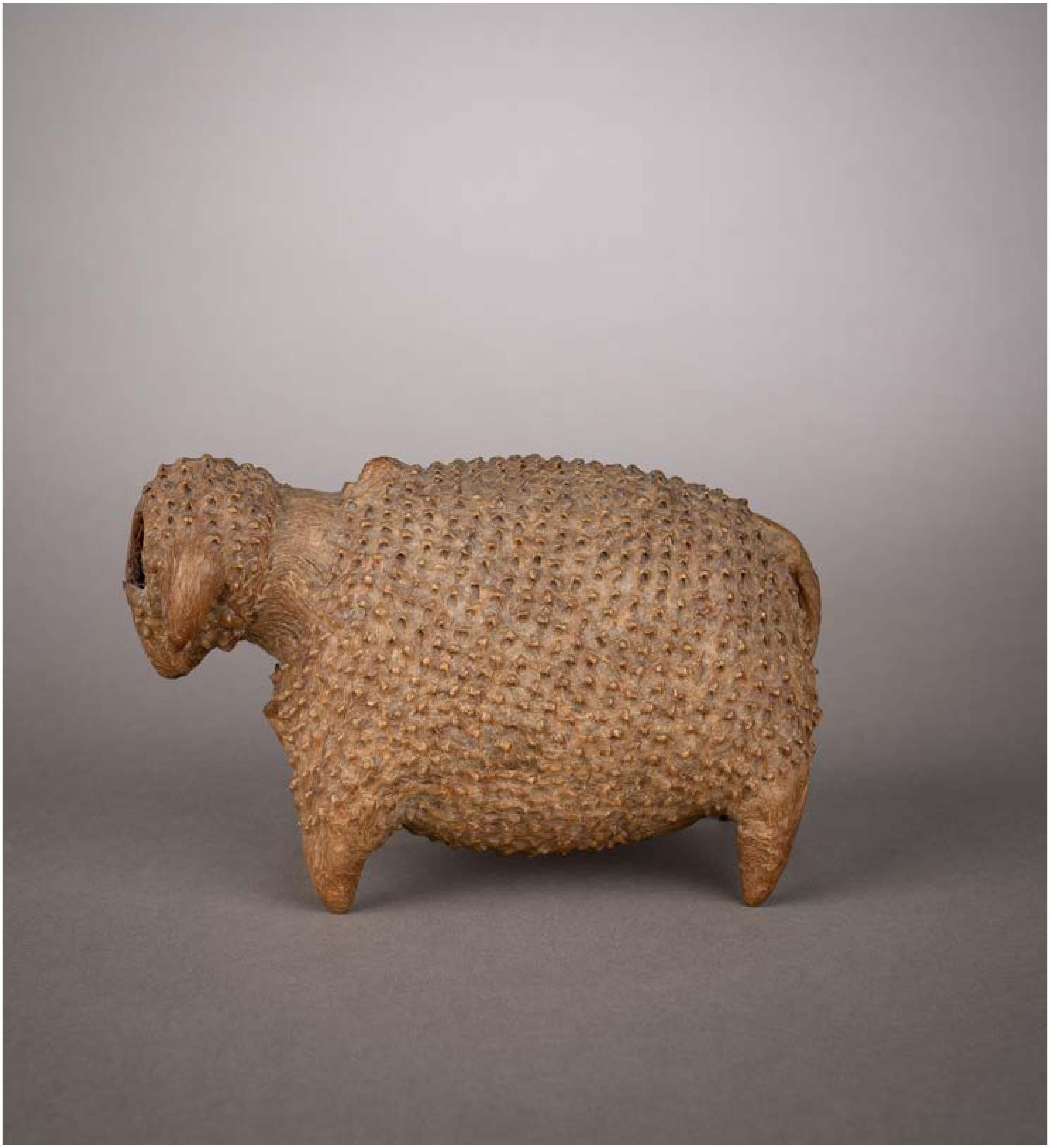
Height: 3 ½ in; Length: 5 ½ in (8.89 cm x 13.97 cm)

PROVENANCE

Private European Collection

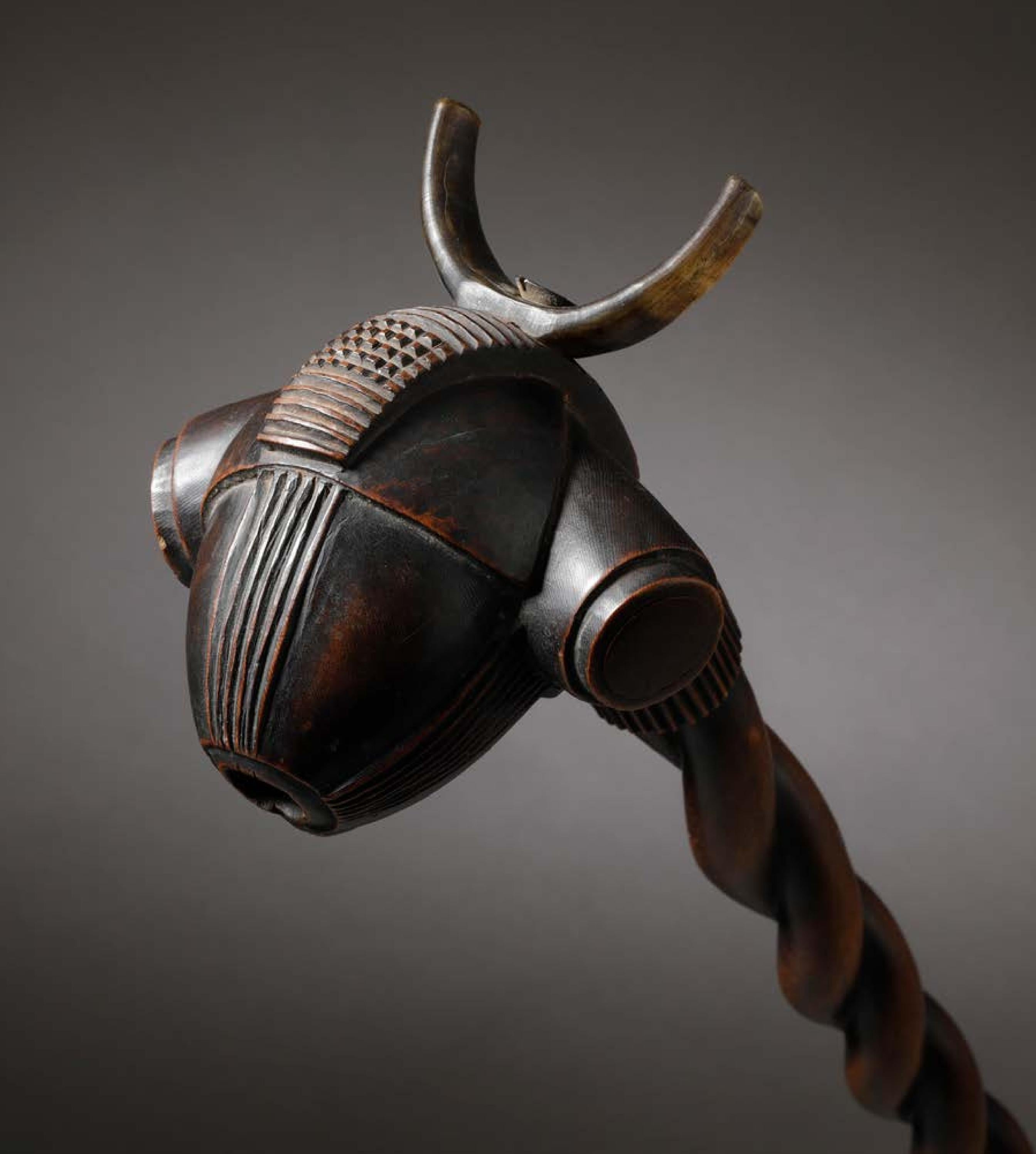
Agnès Woliner, Galerie Aethiopia, Paris, 2003





STAFFS WITH SNUFF CONTAINERS

As with snuffboxes, staffs were closely associated with their owners' identities and were carried by them whenever they were away from home. From elegant dress items, prestige items and staffs of office, these served multiple functions. Some were attractive accessories for a well-turned-out individual or formed part of an impressive dance attire; staffs with motifs associated with status were held by important persons, affirming their position in society. The six staffs and clubs featured here all have an added attribute – integrated into each is a hollow, or multiple hollows, in which snuff was stored.



21

SNUFF STAFF WITH HORNS

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

COLONY OF NATAL

19th century
Wood, horn, metal
Length: 23 5/8 in; Width 4 ½
in (60 cm x 11.5 cm)

PROVENANCE
Jonathan Lowen, London
The Conru Collection, Brussels
Private Collection, USA

PUBLICATION HISTORY
The Tribal Arts of Africa, p 228, no 14
The Art of Southeast Africa, cover, p 199

This zoomorphic snuff staff embodies a fineness of carving and multiplicity of features that aggregate seamlessly to produce a complex and vital form. Exceptional in its pristine high-tech quality, it is fashioned to give the illusion that the whole contains movable parts: knobs to twirl, fluted bands to turn, cogs to move, swivel and tighten. Used as a cache for snuff, this was a prestigious accessory that complimented its owner's appearance and enhanced their status, especially on public occasions.

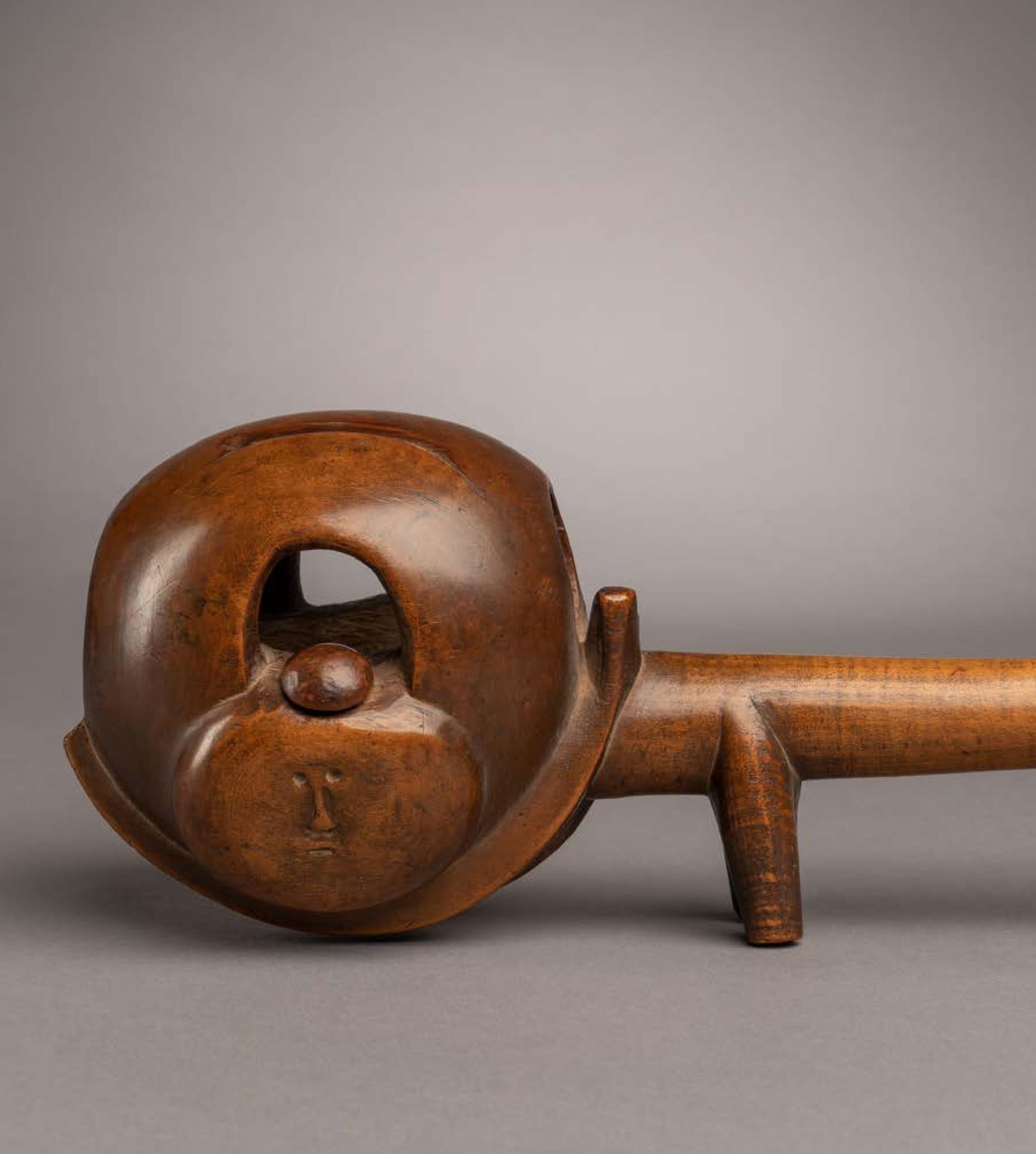
The mechanical inferences are not surprising, given the rapid industrialization of the Colony of Natal in the 19th century. The population was increasingly exposed to an influx of machinery and military equipment. Soldiers with their guns, binoculars, buckles, and wagons would have been commonplace. By 1860, the first 1.86 miles (3 km) of railway was built in Durban and, by 1912, it had expanded to join other rail systems throughout southern Africa. Increasingly, the African population were passengers on trains, working in mines, and seconded to the army and police force, exposed to a visual language shaped by industrialized technology and its portent for power.

However, the metaphoric language of this snuff staff is not just industrial. Its relational dynamics have been set up so that the mechanical works in concert with the anthropomorphic and the zoomorphic, presenting the viewer with visual conundrums similar to those in the vessel no. 6 (raised bowl on tiered support). The two 'ears' projecting from the sides of the head seem to sport the austere, disk-shaped wooden ear plugs popular in the region in the 19th century. The raised band of grooved and bumped designs that crests the 'head', terminating at the 'forehead' and the nape of the finial, hints at a neatly-coiffured

hairstyle. This raised band, often composed only of carefully carved rows of pyramidical bumps (*amasumpa*) is present on some items from 19th century KwaZulu-Natal region, including a carved cup[78] in the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology in Cambridge collected by Henry Bulwer, on two staffs with rounded finials (*iwisa*) in the Field Museum Chicago acquired from Eduard Remenyi[79] and one in the British Museum said to come from Ladysmith.[80] Something of the fineness of the carving and silky patina of the snuff staff discussed here is also evident in the example in the British Museum.

The double helix of the shaft punctuated top and bottom with ridged 'collets', suggests an imaginary rotation in opposite directions, creating the torsion that shaped the familiar spiraled feature seen on some staffs and spoon handles from the region. The fluted rings of the 'collets' also allude to metal couplings that could be tightened or loosened, 'hypothetically' allowing the staff to telescope in and out – a case of skeumorphism taking its cues from an early industrial age. Even the 'snout' of the finial, with its 4 bands of parallel grooves, suggest that it can be rotated and swiveled within the 'illusory' casing at the pinnacle of the shaft.

Two elegant horns, secured to the staff finial with a pre-mass production metal screw, curve gracefully up and back, giving the staff a distinctly zoomorphic quality. These also serve as two small legs that support the staff when it lies horizontally with its snout facing upwards. Of particular interest, the staff in the British Museum, mentioned above and said to come from Ladysmith, also has a torso with legs added to the shaft and held in place with two neat metal pins and some wirework.



22

SNUFF STAFF WITH FACE

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

PIETERMARITZBURG, COLONY OF NATAL

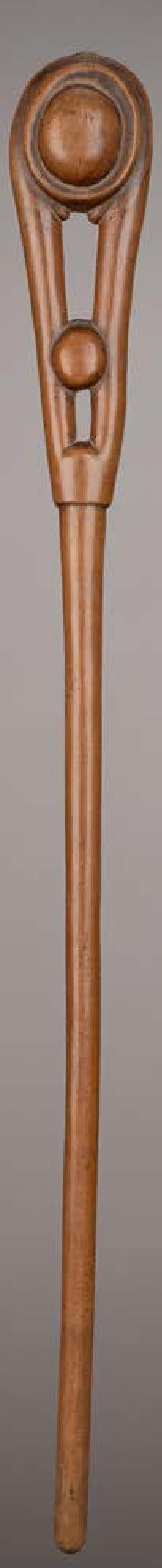
Late 19th century
Wood
Length: 24 ¼ in; Height: 5 in (61.6 cm x 12.7 cm)

PROVENANCE
Michael Koenig, Brussels
The Conru Collection, Brussels
Private Collection, Belgium

PUBLICATION HISTORY
The Art of Southeast Africa, p 82–3,191 no 28.

This snuff staff, with its legged shaft, has a finial consisting of multiple circular and semi-circular shapes brought together in a skilful visual play to form a 'moon-shaped' face with 'horns' above and beard below. Its stopper is a small 'hat' that completes the rotund visage. Both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, it has a quizzical expression and intriguing form.

The British Museum has two similar staffs in their collection with hollow finials for snuff storage.[81] Both are provenanced to Pietermaritzburg, in what was then the Colony of Natal, now KwaZulu-Natal and their collection date is documented to before 1878.



23

SNUFF STAFF WITH CONCENTRIC CIRCLE DESIGN

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

POSSIBLY VHAVENDA /SHANGAAN, NORTH-EASTERN REGIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

19th century
Wood
Height: 31 1/2 in; Width: 2 ¾ in (80.01 cm x 6.98 cm)

PROVENANCE

Bonhams, London
The Conru Collection, Brussels
Private Collection, Belgium

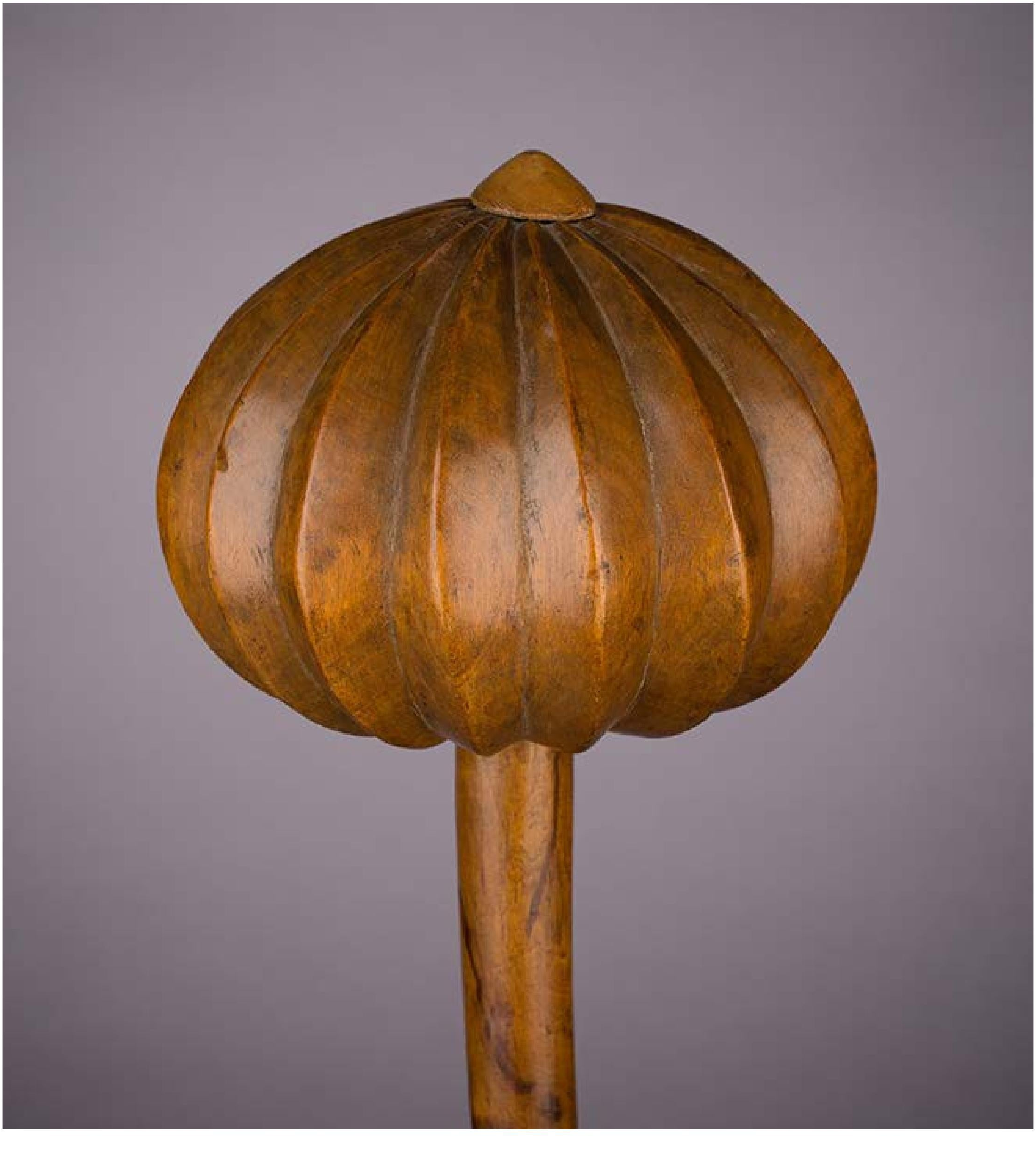
PUBLICATION HISTORY

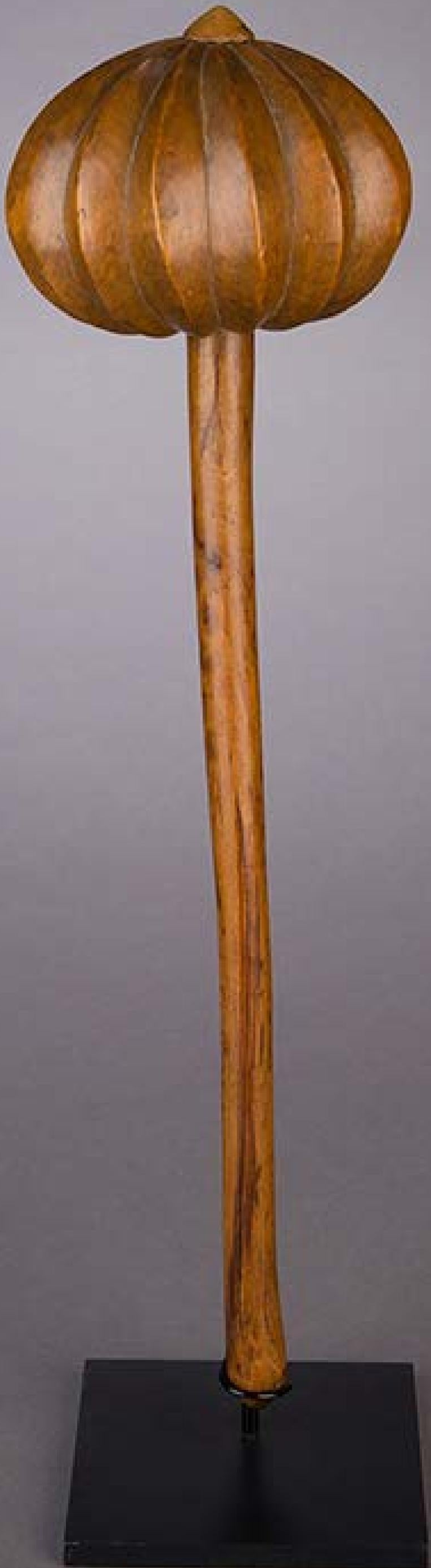
The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 110–1

Although there is no documented provenance for this staff with concentric circle design, the motifs do suggest an origin amongst the Venda-speakers of southern Africa. The circles, reminiscent of the rippling water of a pool into which a stone has been thrown, is linked to Venda court arts from the north-eastern regions of South Africa.[82] It is particularly associated with Lake Fundudzi, the 'Lake of Creation' situated between the towns of Thohoyandou and Louis Trichardt,[83] in Limpopo Province where the VhaVenda have been settled for many centuries. Nettleton writes how the use of this motif, together with others such as chevrons, are signs for the powerful crocodile in the pool and the python that writhes around its perimeter. Both are symbols of chieftainship and power. The repeated use of the concentric circle design is evident on carved wooden doors used by VhaVenda chiefs and on divining dice used by diviners (*mungome*) from this region.

Continuing the circle symbolism within VhaVenda society, sacred drums owned and used by chiefs for rainmaking, to call the community together, in times of calamity and for the initiation ceremonies of young men and women, were hemispherical with a concentric circle design in the centre of their tympanum. These are associated with political and spiritual power as well as myths of origin associated with the Ngoma Lungundu[84] or the 'Drum that is the Voice of God' that should never touch the ground.[85]

However, this extremely unusual example also has characteristics of the style of XiTsonga-speaking carvers who live within the same region.





24

SNUFF KIERIE WITH FLUTED FINIAL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

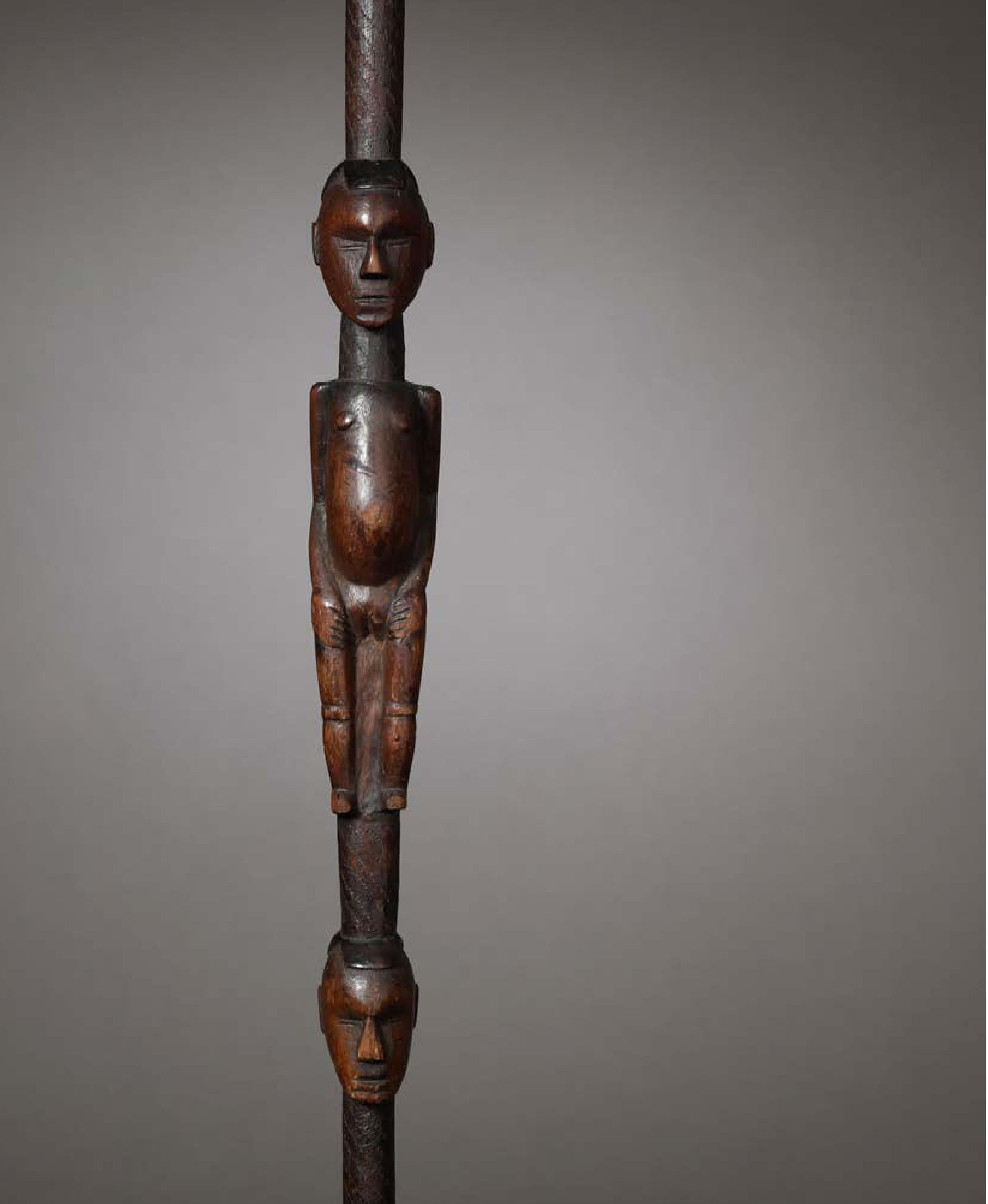
POSSIBLY BANTWANA OR TSONGA, TRANSVAAL
(NOW MPUMALANGA AND LIMPOPO PROVINCES)
OR
POSSIBLY ZULU KINGDOM OR COLONY OF NATAL

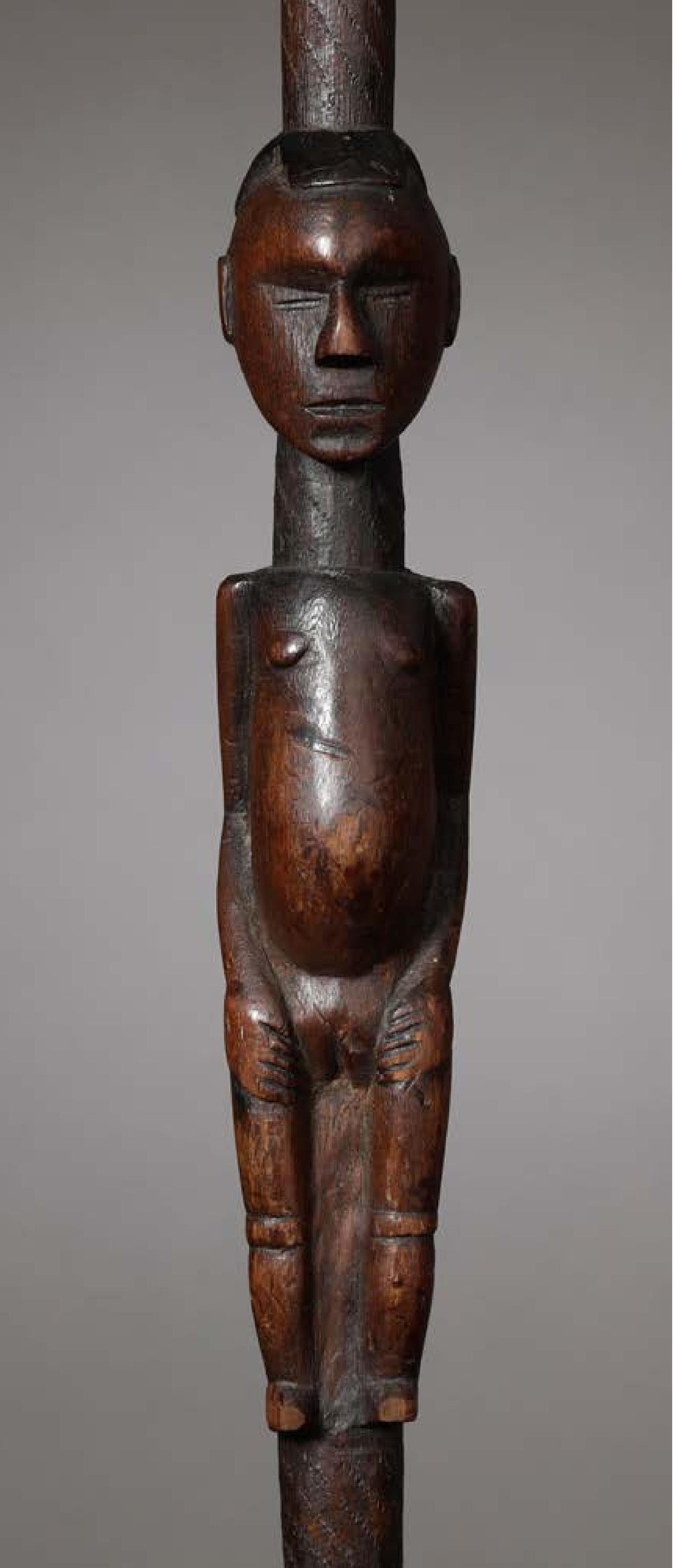
19th century
Wood
Height: 20 in; Width 5.5 in (50.8 cm x 13.9 cm)

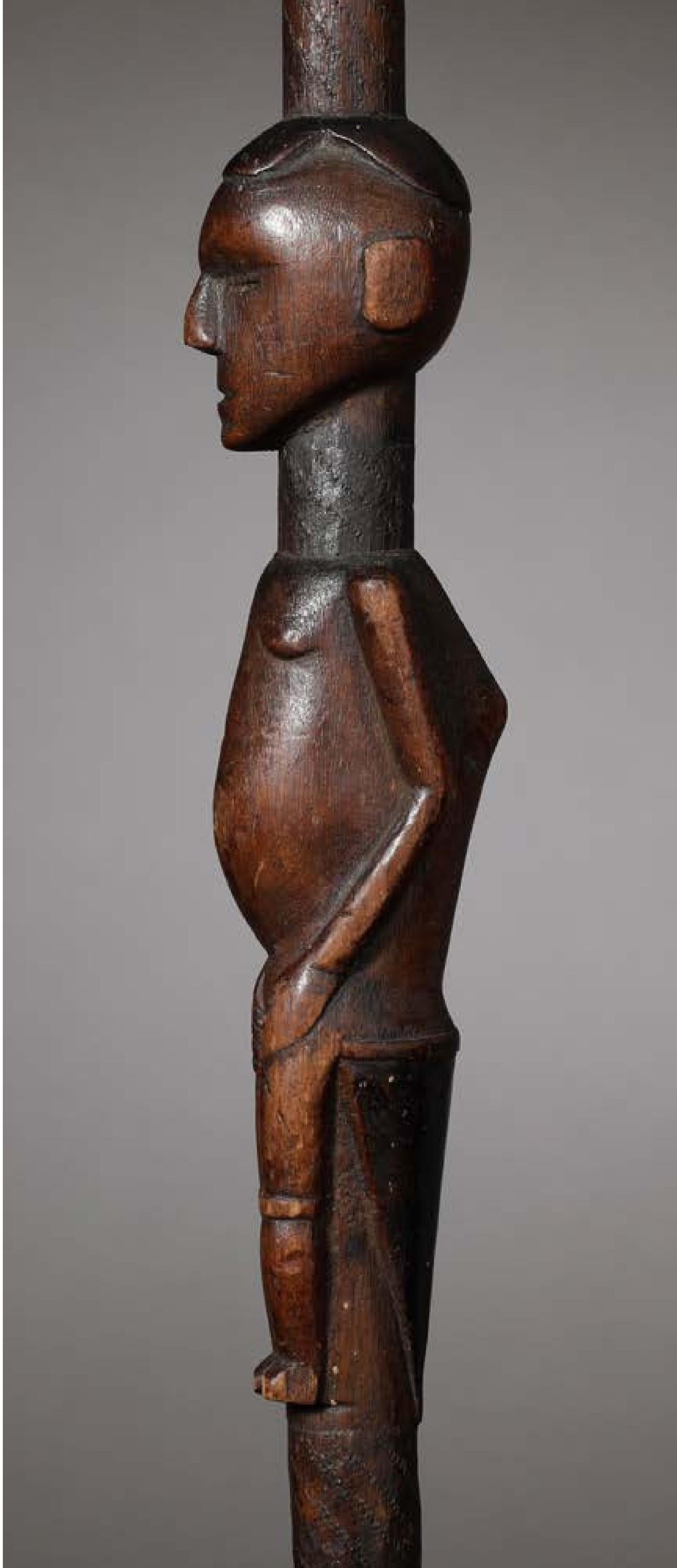
PROVENANCE
Kevin Conru , Brussels
Private Collection, USA

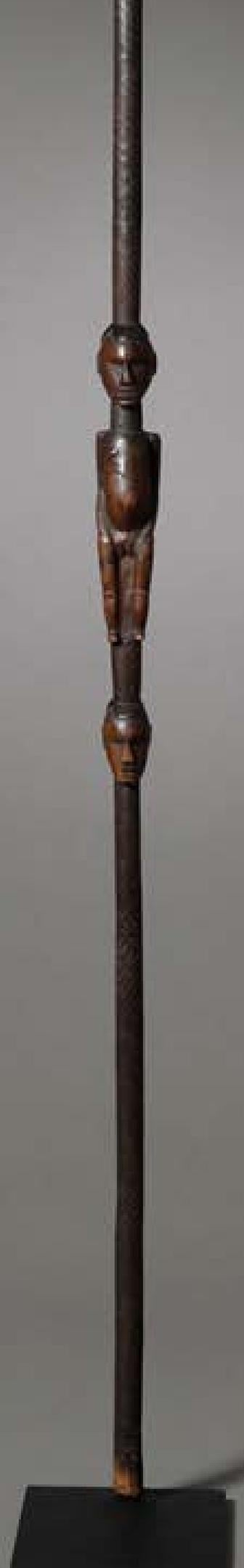
This ceremonial object with its sumptuous, large and heavily fluted finial alerts us to its use as a symbol of power and a connection to the ancestral realm. This link is further amplified by the fact that the head of the club is hollowed-out to be a snuff container with a small stopper. Notwithstanding its symbolic function, this short-handled stick with heavy finial could deliver a fatal blow to the head. Shaped something like a ridged bulb, type of fruit or vegetable, the gadrooned finial bears some resemblance to the vertical support on a Tsonga headrest featured in *The Art of Southeast Africa.*[86]

However, the staff in its entirety resembles those given to young Bantwana boys by their fathers during their initiation into manhood and which they were expected to keep for the rest of their lives.[87] A similar example, said to be 'Zulu,' has a staff embellished with both a beaded collar and carved designs down its shaft.[88] Given this diverse provenance the bulbed motif may well be one that was popular across 19th and early 20th century southern Africa.









25

SNUFF STAFF WITH CARYATID

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

PEDI/BANTWANA, TRANSVAAL (NOW MPUMALANGA AND LIMPOPO PROVINCES)

19th century
Wood, pokerwork
Height: 38 in (96.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

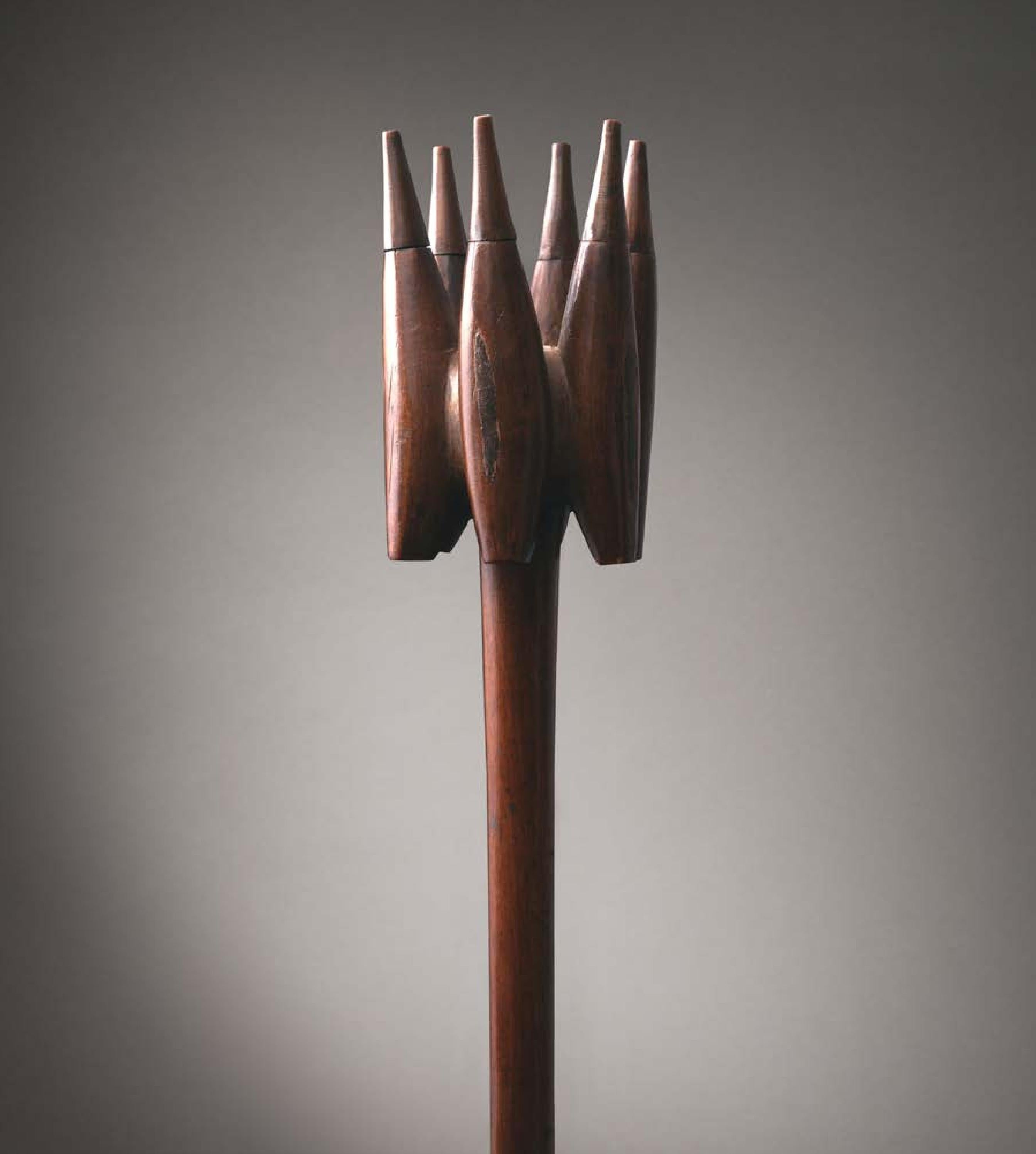
Kevin Conru, Brussels
Nicholas G. Maritz, South Africa

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Relics of War pp 258–9
Thoughts Over an Attribution, Tribal Arts, Spring 1999, K Conru, p106

Carved staffs with full caryatid-like male or female figures, or with discrete head motifs as integral elements, are a frequent form found in the southern African region. Many are challenging to provenance but this finely wrought staff with its elegant carving and traces of intricate wirework that once adorned it, is very likely from the Mpumalanga or Limpopo Provinces of South Africa. The long, swallow-tailed back skirt on the carved female figure is typical of both the Bapedi, a north Sotho group from the region, but also of the Bantwana, a related people living in close proximity. The short-cropped hairstyle is also typical of Bantwana male and female youths, as can be seen in Peter Magubane's sumptuously illustrated publication on the Bantwane.[89]

The closed eyes and imperturbable expression of both heads on this staff suggest a meditative state, one in which the spirits of the ancestors are accessed. The bilateral symmetry, upright pose and hands lightly placed on the thighs of the figure confirm the likelihood of this reading. That the ancestral shades are evoked and invited during the consumption of snuff extends the aura of the staff.



26

SNUFF STAFF WITH 6 POINTED CONTAINERS

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Late 19th/early 20th century

Wood

Height: 26 3/4 in; Width 3 3/8 in (68 cm x 8.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

The Conru Collection, Brussels

Private Collection, Belgium

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Art of Southeast Africa, pp 203, 118–9

Unusual in its hexadic finial of six elongated pod-like snuff containers with pointed stoppers, this staff suggests a southern African origin in its sophisticated design and refined play of form and function. A virtuoso carving, with multiple holders for snuff, it must have been carried by its owner with pride attesting to his generosity impressing both the living and the ancestors. The cluster of pointed pods that create a crown-like apex with peaks and dips, has also been likened to the rapid-firing, multiple-barrel, gatling gun that was used with devastating effect on African populations by colonial forces in the late 19th and early 20th century.[90] In this manifestation it would have invoked the essences of power manifest in both the weapon and the ancestors.

DECORATED OSTRICH EGG SHELLS

Engraved, as well as unornamented, ostrich egg shells (OES) were part of the household items of nomadic communities from the Middle and Late Stone age up until the 20th century. Their value initially lay in their nourishing contents but, once empty, the light, strong and durable shell served as a container for that most precious commodity, water. There is an especially high frequency of these shells in archaeological excavations in arid areas such as the Northern Cape and southern Namibia.

Some of the OES found intentionally buried have engraved surfaces. Evidence suggest that they were transported across the landscape as part of a social network linking widely scattered, small groups of people. Jacobson writes that these designs may have been personal markings showing ownership and linked to exchange routes called *hxaro*.[91] It may even be that designs were added to as the shells continued on their journey from community to community. Geometric designs such as grids, rows of dots, cross hatchings, ladder-like motifs, circles with spokes, triangles as well as images of animals including flying birds and a buffalo have been found.[92]

The geometric decorative designs on the outer surfaces of the shells are most likely symbolically loaded. Abstract graphic renderings of lines, triangles, grids, ladders, zigzags, stars and other markings resemble images engraved onto rock surfaces in the landscape and at sacred sites such as at Driekopseiland, a rocky outcrop in the bed of the Riet River near Kimberly.[93] However, Jacobson and Noli comment that the seemingly abstract motifs could also be images of tangible objects such as headbands, pendants, or nets.[94]

Some OES, such as no. 27, have recognizable images of trains, fish, birds, and horses depicted. This realistically rendered content most likely dates to a time of traveler, colonial or missionary contact and could also be a response to images seen in newspapers and books. The earliest known OES with realistic imagery on its outer surface was collected in 1772 by Swedish doctor and naturalist, Andries Sparrman, who visited South Africa and traveled through its south-eastern interior. This OES, now in the Ethnographic Museum of Sweden in Stockholm, has an image on one side of what is said to be a 'Hottentot' woman wearing a sheepskin kaross, and on the opposite side a warrior also in traditional outfit. The lower end of the shell is decorated with a star and petal-like designs.[95]

27

ENGRAVED OSTRICH EGG SHELL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

/XAM, NORTHERN CAPE

19th century

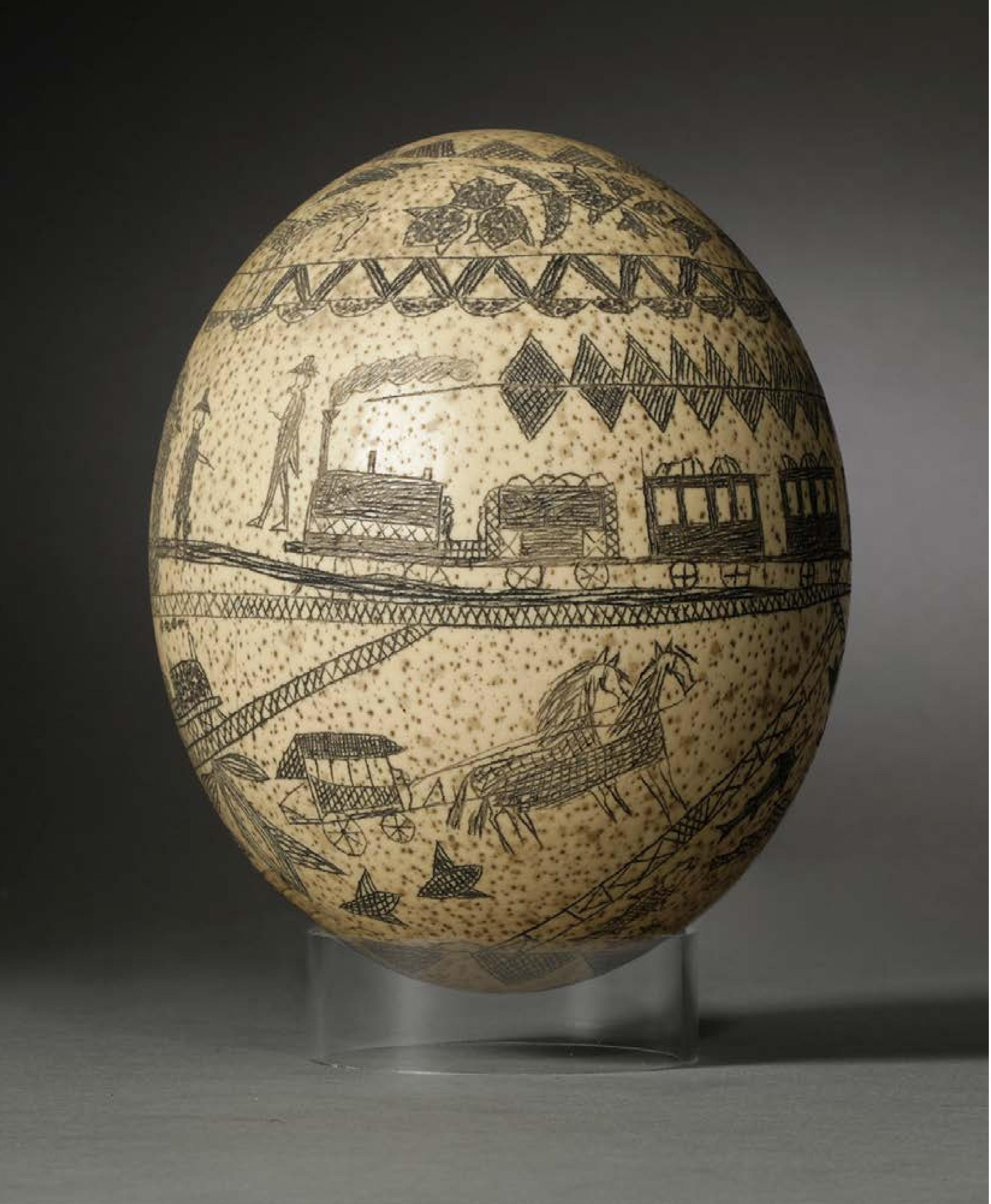
Ostrich egg shell, black ash or charcoal

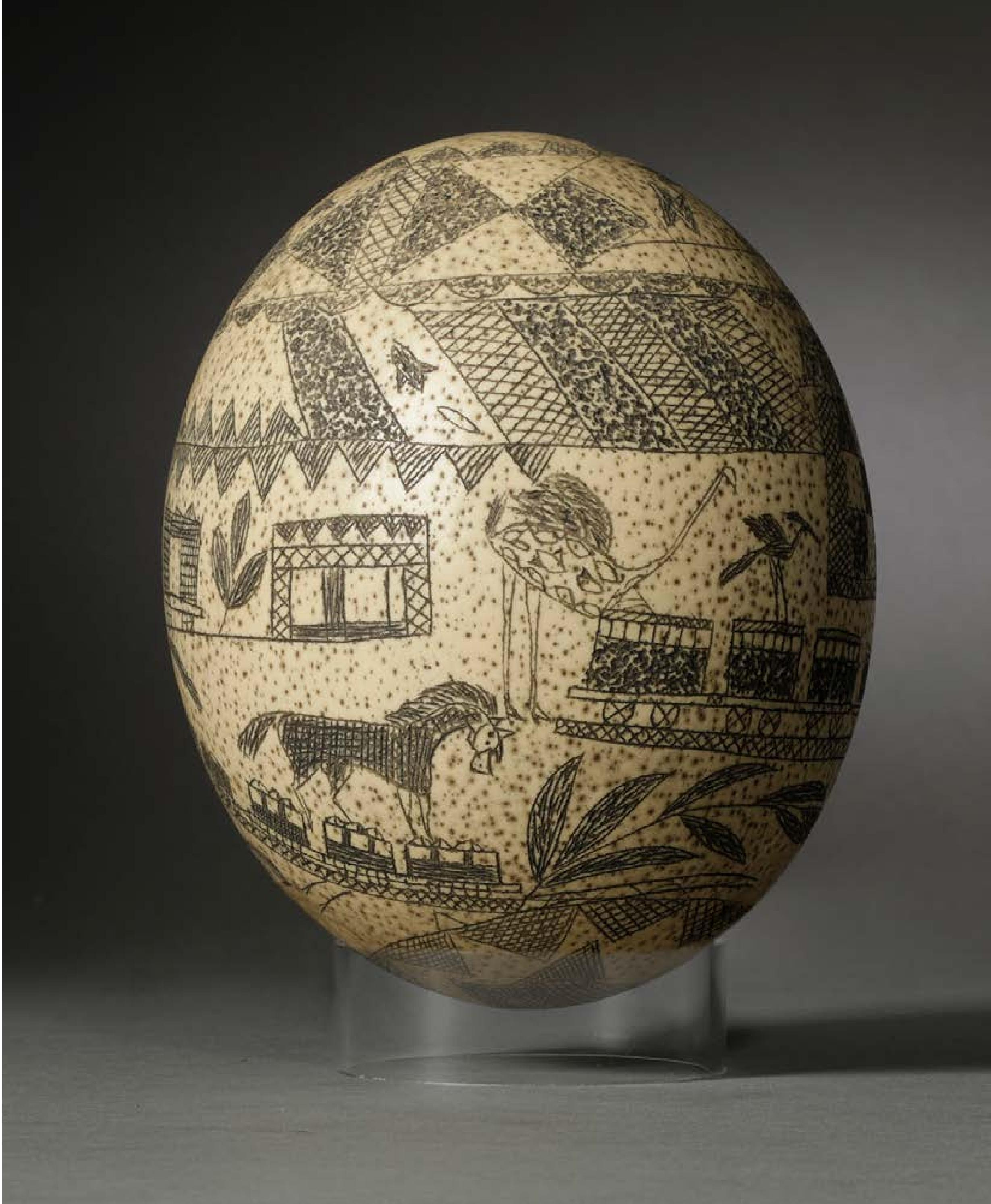
Height 6 in: Width 4 ½ in (15.24 cm x 11.43 cm)

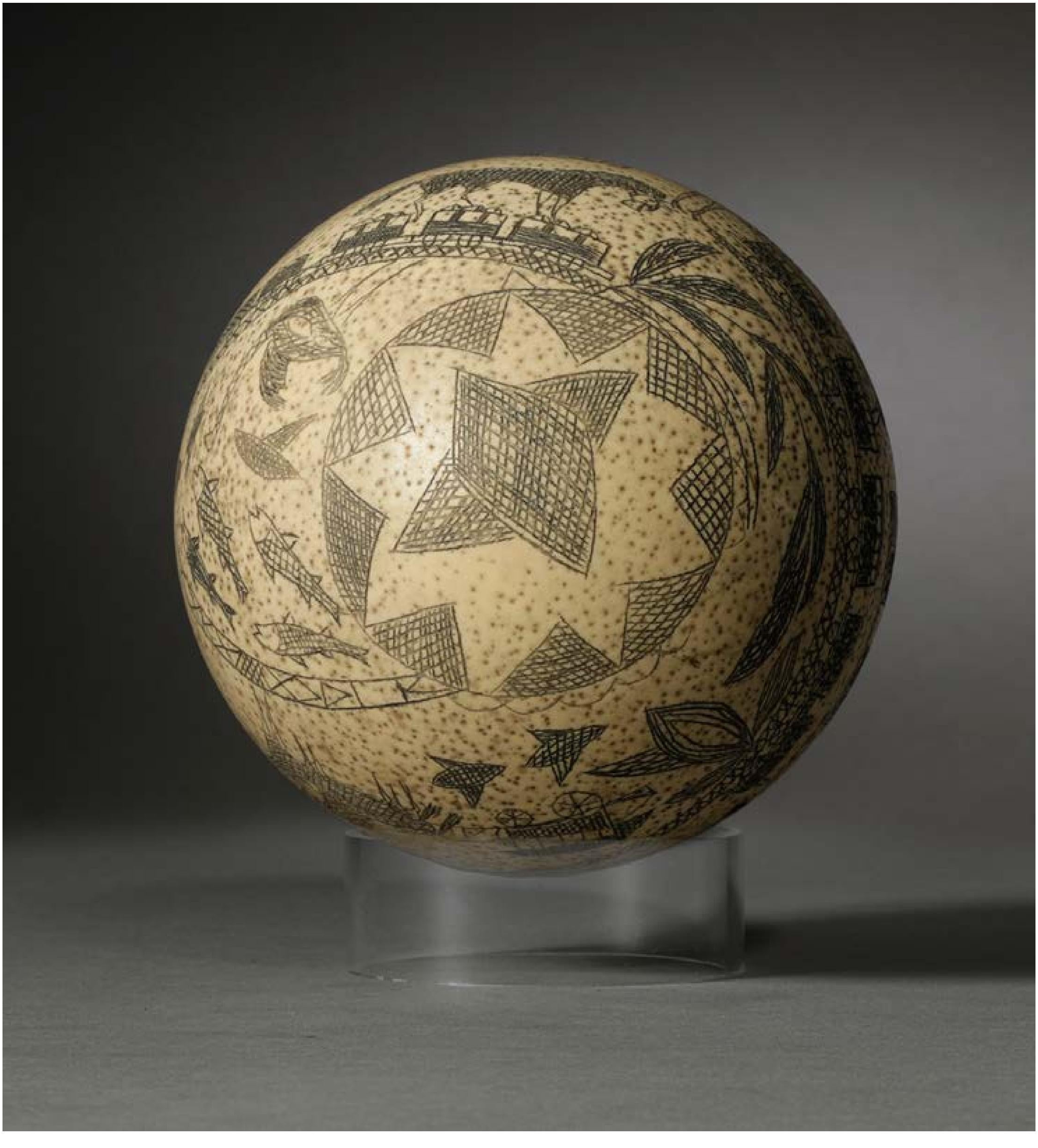
PROVENANCE

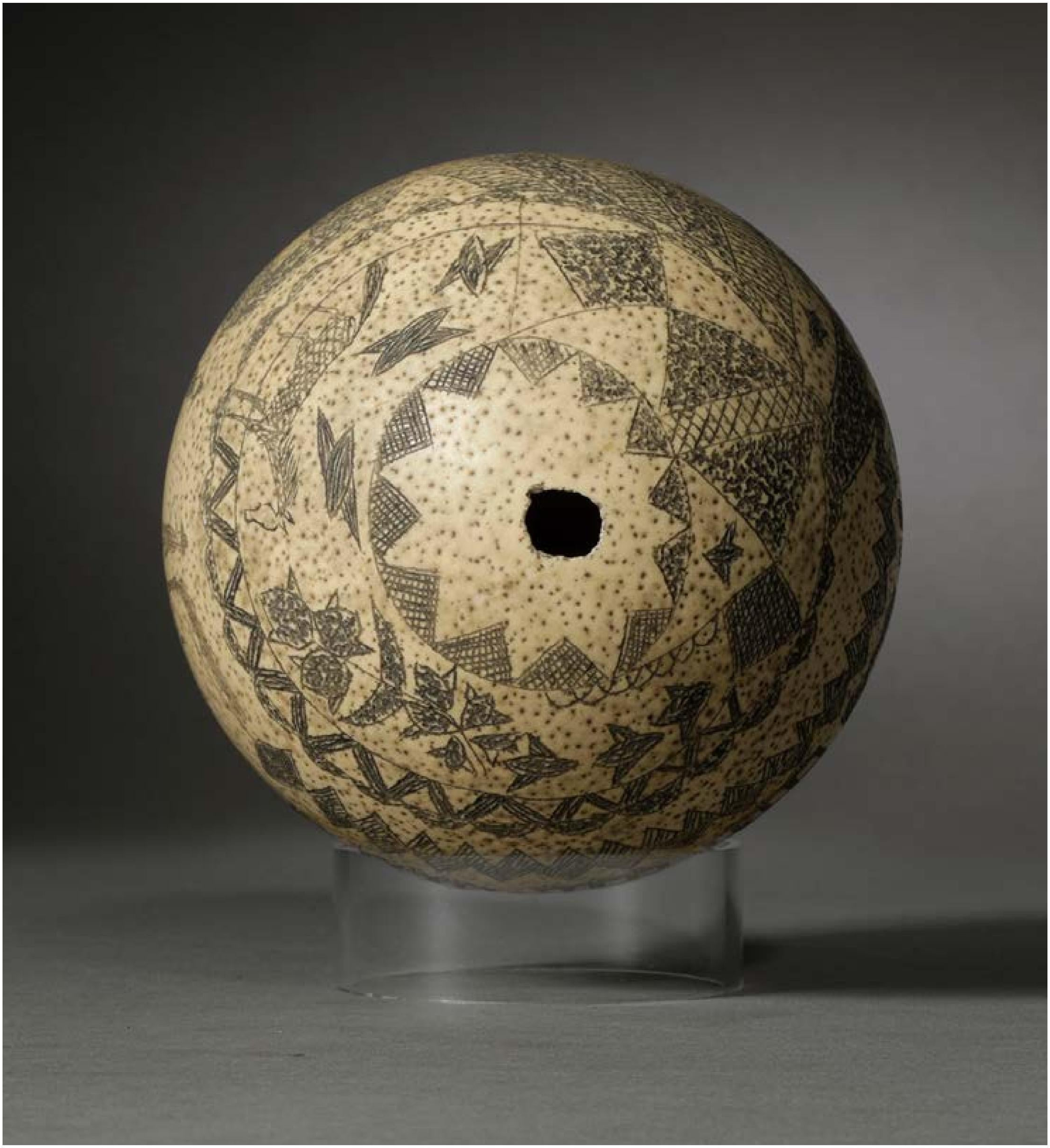
Private UK.Collection

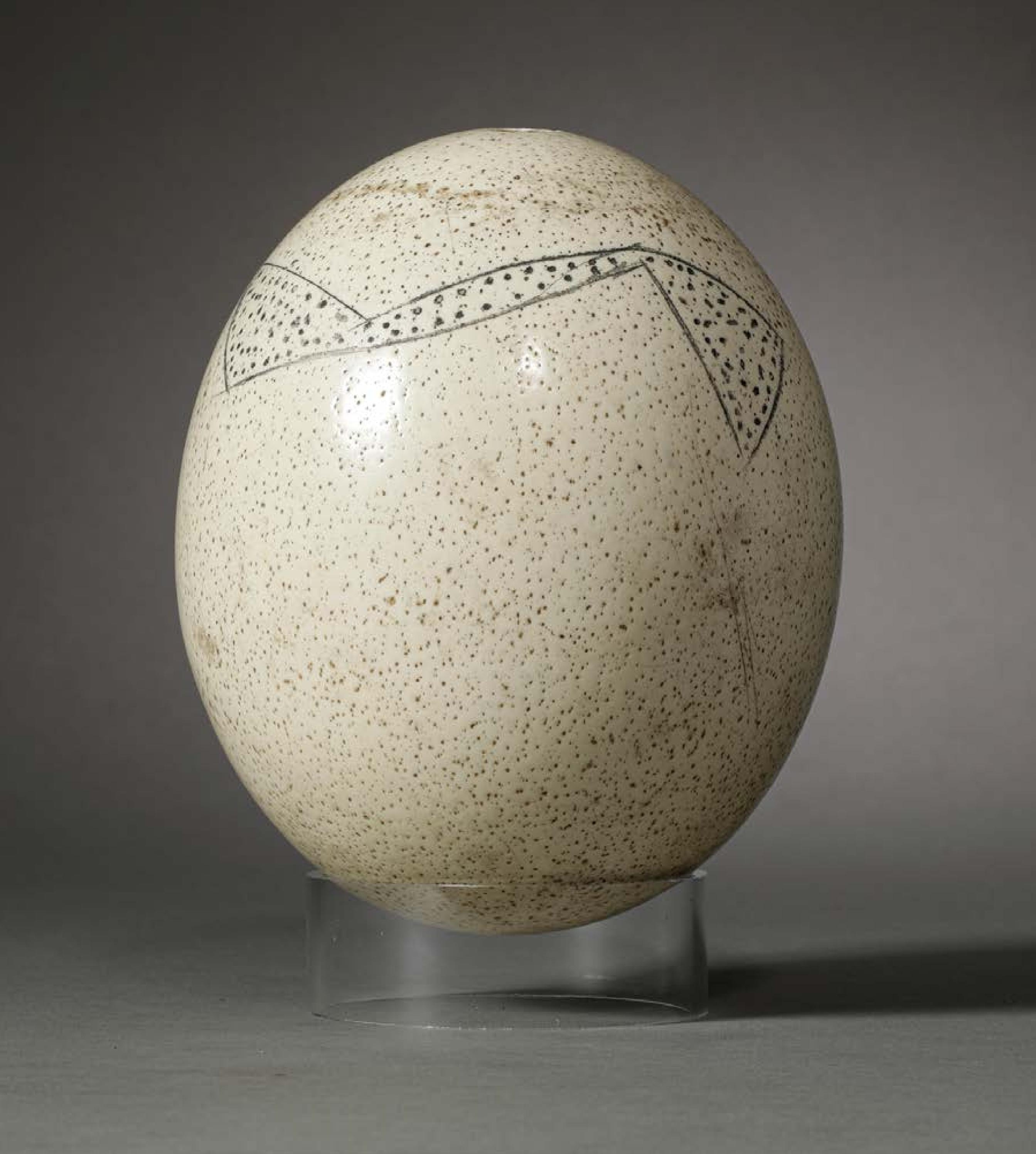
Jeremy Sabine, South Africa











28

ENGRAVED OSTRICH EGG SHELL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

/XAM, NORTHERN CAPE

20th century

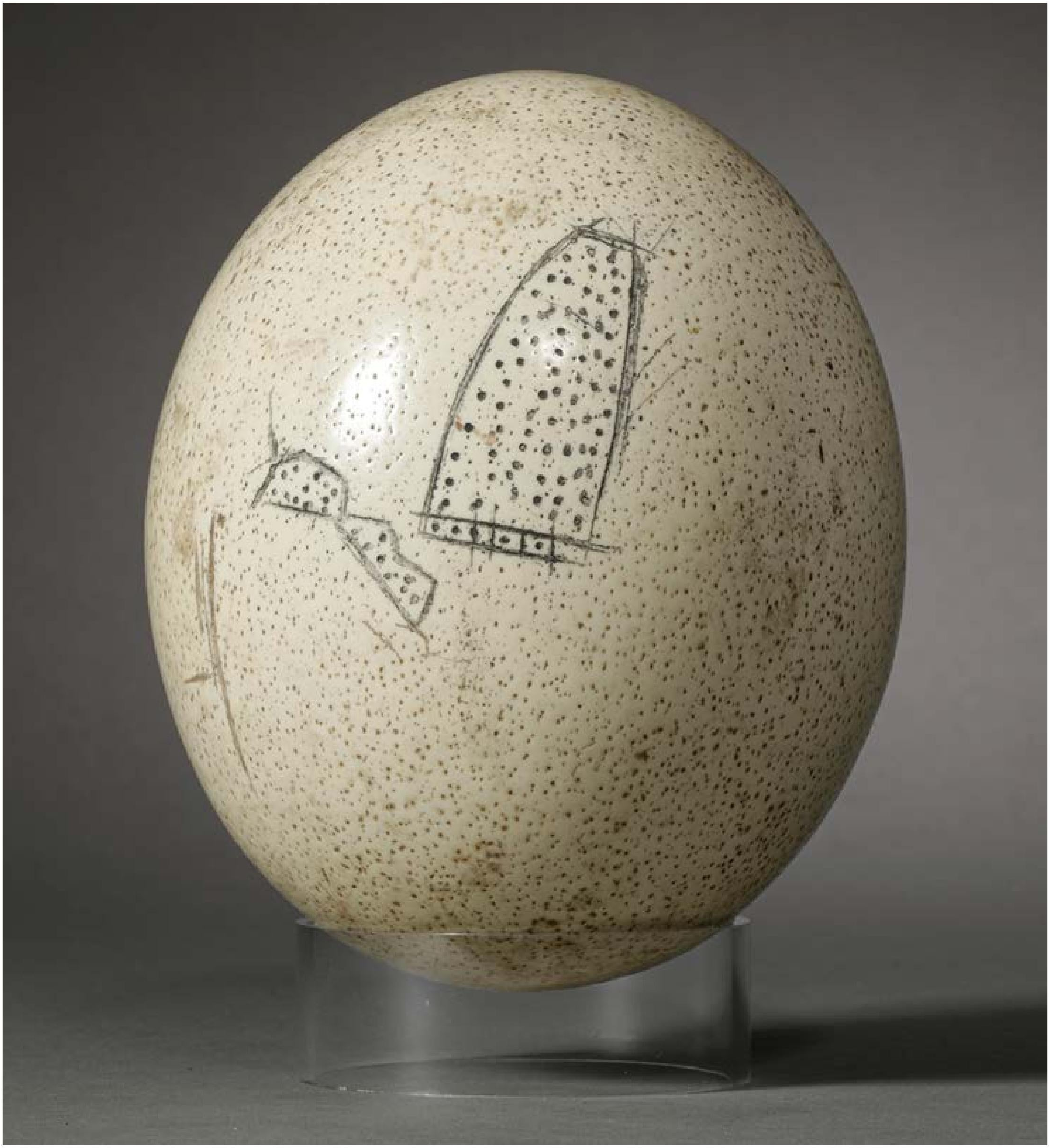
Ostrich egg shell, black ash or charcoal

Height 6 in: Width 4 ½ in (15.24 cm x 11.43 cm)

PROVENANCE

Egon Guenther, South Africa

Karel Nel Collection



29

ENGRAVED OSTRICH EGG SHELL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

/XAM, NORTHERN CAPE

20th century

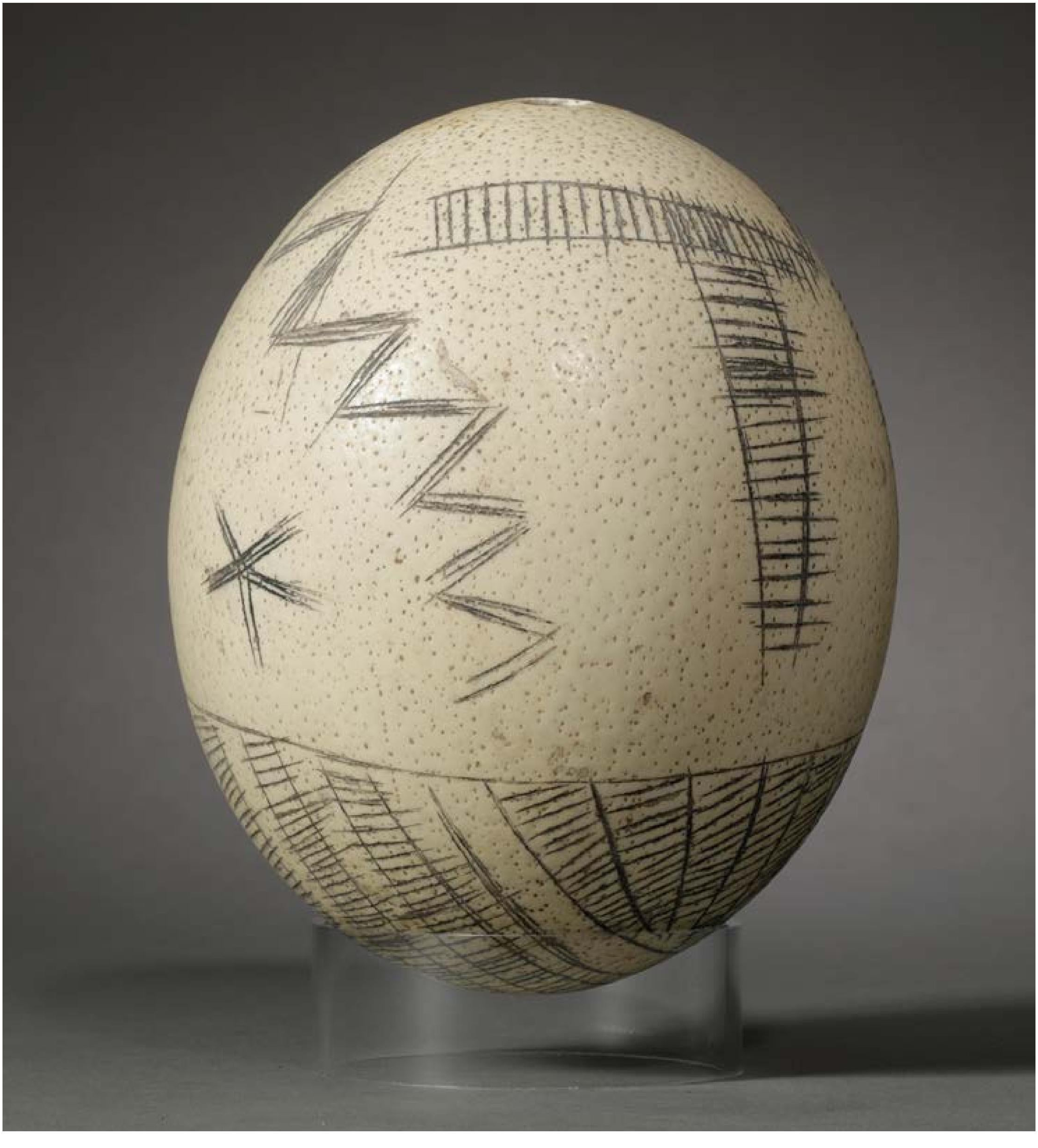
Ostrich egg shell, black ash or charcoal

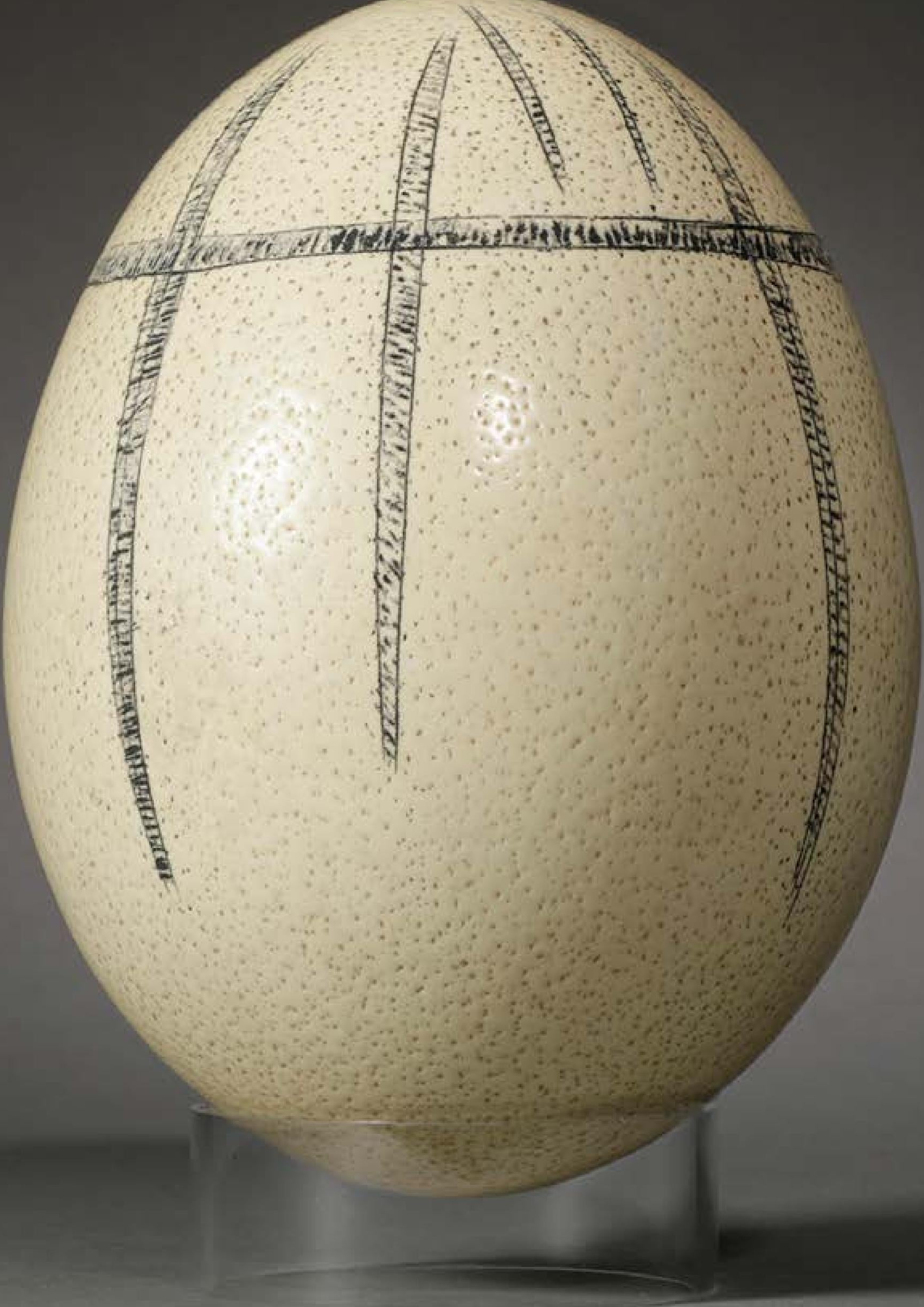
Height 6 in: Width 4 ½ in (15.24 cm x 11.43 cm)

PROVENANCE

Patrick J. Dickens, South Africa (1953–1992) A South African linquist who published a dictionary of the Ju/'hoan language

Karel Nel Collection





30

ENGRAVED OSTRICH EGG SHELL

VERNACULAR: *UNKNOWN*

/XAM, NORTHERN CAPE

20th century
Ostrich egg shell, black ash or charcoal
Height 6 in: Width 4 ½ in (15.24 cm x 11.43 cm)

PROVENANCE

Robert Cnoops, South Africa

Nessa Leibhammer biography

Nessa Leibhammer is an independent researcher, writer and curator with a particular interest in material culture approached from an interdisciplinary position. After studying architecture at the University of Cape Town, Leibhammer completed a degree in Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her Master's Degree in Precolonial Studies took her to the Neolithic site of Catalhöyük in Turkey where she explored how archaeologists create and present knowledge about the past through imaging. Leibhammer was an honorary research fellow at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Cambridge in 2012/3 and currently holds the position of honorary research fellow at the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town.

Her publications include *Jackson Hlungwani* (co-ed) forthcoming, *Tribing and Untribing the Archive* (co-ed) and *Dungamanz: Stirring Waters* (ed) and she has curated exhibitions such as *Jackson Hlungwani: A New Jerusalem; Gae Lebowa/ Home North* and *Matters of Spirit*. Her co-curated exhibitions include *Jackson Hlungwani: Alt and Omega, Dungamanzi: Stirring Waters* and *Evocations of the Child: fertility figures from southern Africa*.

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Notes

1 Barley, N., 1984 'Placing the West African Potter' in Picton, J. *Earthenware in Asia and Africa* (Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art: Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia), p 12.

2 Most vernacular words used in this catalogue are from isiZulu. The exceptions are: *hakata* (Shona); *kwae and koma* (Sesotho); *hxaro and //hara* (Khoisan); *mungome* (Tshivenda). Other exceptions have been noted in captions for objects.

3 While pastoralism and agriculture were the main activities, the region was also active with trading, mining, iron working, and hunting as part of the economy.

4 Before colonial conquest to approximately to the mid 19th century.

5 Many of the examples cited in this text are from writings on 'Zulu' culture as this is the one with most published sources.

6 This movement was not inevitable, with some moving in opposite directions. Shoshangane moved northwards from the KZN region into Mozambique in the 19th century and the Ngoni under Zwangendaba colonised parts of Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania around the same time.

7 Hunter-gatherers were considered very powerful by the incoming farmer communities. As the original inhabitants of the southern African region, their connection to the natural environment was understood as strong, with some employed as rainmakers by the pastoralist incomers.

8 Term used by the South Sotho to describe their cattle.

9 In February, 1904, Mbovu ka Mtshumayeli, speaking about Zulu culture, told colonial official James Stuart that '[o] ur great bank is cattle.' From Wright, J., and C. de B. Webb, (eds) 1982. *'The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples'*, (JSA) Volume 3 (Mbo-Mpa). The testimony of Mbovu ka Mtshumayeli. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press and Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL). Accessed from the APC 500YA website in August 2021.

10 Known as the Central Cattle Pattern. While regional variations are found, the basic principle remains the same. Homesteads, which generally consist of a senior man and his wives, their minor children and adult sons, are predominantly circular. The byre was not just the place where livestock were sheltered at night and milked – it was a sacred place where important patrilineal males were buried and where their spirits lingered. It was also the meeting place where men gathered to socialise, to discuss important issues and also to hear and judge legal cases.

11 Bjerk, P. 2006. 'They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka' in *The Journal of African History* 47(01): 1–9, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 1.

12 Ibid p 2.

13 ibid p 5.

14 Berglund, A-I., 1989. *Zulu Thought Systems and Symbolism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p 90.

15 Such as Helichrysum petiolare.

16 Vernix caseosa.

17 Berglund p. 165–7.

18 Berglund p 338.

19 In Zulu mythology Nkombuwana, the female deity, personified spring and was associated with mists, rivers and fertility of people, crops and vegetation. It is said that she

taught people to make beer and her devotees were women who did the agricultural work and brewed the beer.

20 Beer as part of the marriage gifts (isiZulu: *umbhondo*) was sent in clay vessels by the fiancé to her, soon to be, husband's homestead as a gift of goodwill that strengthened affinal relationships. Cattle passed in the other direction as part of the exchange of wealth between the two family lineages who were about to be united.

21 Krige (1936) and Shaw (1935) quoted by Wanless, A. 1991. 'Public Pleasures: Smoking and Snuff-taking in Southern Africa' in *Art and Ambiguity,* Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery, p 126–143.

22 Wanless draws extensively on the writings of Colin Murray in his chapter 'Sex, smoking and the shades: a Sotho symbolic idiom' in Whisson, M.G. and West, M. (eds.), 1975, *Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip and Bosko, D. 1981, Why Basotho wear blankets. *African Studies* 40 (1) 23–32.

23 See Murray 1975, p 59.

24 Shaw, E.M. and Van Warmelo, N.J. 1988. *Annals of the South African Museum, Vol 58, Part 4 The Material Culture of the Cape Nguni. Personal and general.* Cape Town: Rustica Press, p 520.

25 Ibid pp 520–25.

26 Berglund, p 232.

27 The tree recorded as receiving the apology in this case is the *umunka (Maerua angolensis/thunder tree*/bead-bean tree, bead-pod-tree, knobbly-bean tree). Berglund, p 50.

28 Wright J. and C de B Webb (eds) 1986, *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples',* (JSA) Vol 4 (Mqa-Ndu). Testimony of Mtshapi ka Noradu, given on 1.4.1918 p 75–6. Accessed from the APC 500YA website in June 2021.

29 John Wright personal communication, 1 July 2021.

30 http://pza.sanbi.org/ziziphus-mucronata. Accessed 8 July 2021.

31 There are one or two occasions where women have been documented as carvers.

32 Texier, P-J, Porraz, G., Parkington, J. et al. 2013, 'The contexts, form and significance of the MSA engraved ostrich eggshell collection from Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Western Cape, South Africa' in Journal of Archaeological Science, 40, pp 3412–31.

33 Jacobson, L. 2006. 'Namibian Decorated Ostrich Eggs Rediscovered' in *The Digging Stick*, Vol 23 (2), p 14.

34 Morris, D. 2002. Driekopseiland and 'the rain's magic power': history and landscape in a new interpretation of a Northern Cape rock engraving site. MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, pp 12, 134–5, 189. 212, 217.

35 Klopper and Nel, 2002, pp 14–15.

36 Elliott, C. 2016. "'The Name of Zulu is now given:' Provenancing Objects from Colonial Natal in the British Museum's Christies Collection," in Hamilton and Leibhammer, *Tribing and Untribing the Archive: Identity and the Material Record in Southern KwaZulu-Natal in the Late Independent and Colonial Periods*, pp 496–7'.

37 Museum Number NNBA 990.2.2857.

38 Wright J. and C de B Webb (eds) 1976, *JSA*,1976 Vol.1 (Ant-Lyl). Testimony of Baleni ka Silwana, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press and Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL), p 36. Accessed from the APC 500YA website, June 2021.

39 Museum Number 1979.539.

40 Museum Number JL-J-4.

41 Museum Numbers: JAG 2012.06.31 a, b; JAG 1992.11.15; JL-J-2.

42 While it is said to come from the Cape of Good Hope this is a highly unlikely place for its manufacture.

43 Museum Number Af.1561a-c.

44 These were documented in illustrations by Emil Holub, Czech physician, explorer, cartographer, and ethnographer, and also by the French missionary Eugene Casalis.

45 Museum number Af1954,+23.3045.

46 The museum was unfortunately unable to furnish any further information about the piece. Email from Sati Benes Chock (Curatorial Project Administrator & Editor, Honolulu Museum of Art) to Nessa Leibhammer, 20 July 2021.

47 Sieber, R. 1980. *African Furniture and Household Objects*. New York: The American Federation of Arts and Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, p 189.

48 Jolles, F. 2015, *Zulu Beer Vessels in the Twentieth Century: their history, classification and geographical distribution*. Stuttgart/Germany: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, p 243, No 216.

49 Ibid.

50 Grossert, J.W. 1978, *Zulu Crafts*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, p 36, Plate 11.

51 Jolles, 2015. pp. 3, 85-6, 244-5, Nos 303 and 314.

52 See Bohme, H.E. 1976, 'Some Nguni Crafts' Part 1, 'Calabashes' in Shaw, E.M, *Annals of the South African Museum,* Vol. 70. Cape Town: Trustees of the South African Museum.

53 *Lagenaria siceraria*, Family: Cucurbitaceae, Common names: bottle gourd, calabash (Eng.); kalbas (Afr.); moraka (North Sotho); segwana (seTswana); iselwa (isiXhosa, isiZulu). The fruit shells of Oncoba spinosa, the snuff box tree and the Strychnos spinosa, the monkey orange tree

were also popular. While fashioned into containers for snuff they were also used for keeping medicines, charms, and scented oils.

54 Shaw, E.M, (1929–8) *Annals of the South African Museum,* Vol. 24. Cape Town: Trustees of the South African Museum, p 227–8.

55 This may have been done while the gourd was still green to secure the wire ends firmly. As the gourd dried and shrunk it tightened around the ends.

56 Shaw, Plate LXIII p. 254.

57 Müller and Snellerman, Plate XII, Fig 4.

58 Shaw, Vol 24 Plate XXX Fig 4, text p 154-5.

59 Ibid Plate LXX, Fig. 6.

60 Ibid Plate LXXI, Figs 4 ,5 and 6.

61 Junod, H., 1962. *Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol 2, New York: University Books, p 128 Fig 9 and p133.

62 Museum Number Af1931,0313.8.

63 It was acquired by the British Museum from the Welcome Collection in the 1950s and had, by then, lost any documentation it might have once had.

64 SAM Vol 24 Plate LXVI, described as 'Basutho'.

65 Crawford, G. 2008. *Sicebile: Swaziland's Cultural Adornment and Artefacts*. Durban: Atlas Printers, pp 38–40.

66 Müller, H.P.N., and Snellerman, J.F.,1893, *Industrie Des Cafres Du Sud-Est De L'Afrique. Collection Recueillie Sur Les Lieux et Notice Ethnographique*. Leyde: E.J. Brill. See Plate XII Figure 2, found in what they describe as 'Zambeze' which refers to the Basin of the Zambezi River that flows to the east coast exiting into the Indian Ocean near Quelimane.

67 WM-4738 Lesotho , WM-4739 Natal, WM-4740 Natal, WM-4741 Natal. These were part of a larger 1920s donation by Ernst August Brunner (1853–1920) a Dutch citizen who had lived for some time in South Africa and had been a Member of the Legislative Assembly and the Natal Government (email correspondence from the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Rotterdam, 17 August 2021).

68 British Museum Number Af1958,14.40.

69 Plate LXVI Fig 3 and 3a and Plate LXVII Figure 3.

70 See object label for Item Z 23836, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (MAA). https://fhya.org/rectangular-brown-paper-label-3?query=sakabula Accessed 16 August 2021.

71 See Shaw, E.M. 1929–38, 'Some Native Snuff-Boxes in the South African Museum' in *Annals of the South African Museum.* Cape Town: Trustees of the South African Museum, Vol. 24, Plates LXVI and LXVII, and Plates XXIV and XXIX.

72 Ibid Plate XXVII, Figs 5,6,7.

73 Ibid Plate XXIX Figs 1–6.

74 E. M. Shaw and N.J. Van Warmelo, 1988, 'The Material Culture of the Cape Nguni, Part 4, Personal and General,' *Annals of the South African Museum* Vol. 58 Plate 116 no 6. Cape Town: Rustica Press.

75 The entry for this object in *Africa Art of a Continent* gives a general description of these types of snuff boxes describing their shape as usually, but not always of bulls and cattle (p 215).

76 E. M. Shaw and N.J. Van Warmelo. 1988. p. 745 in the *Annals of the South African Museum,* Vol 58, Part 4, March 1988. 'Personal and General, The Material Culture of the Cape Nguni'. Cape Town: Rustica Press.

77 E. M. Shaw on p 228 of the *Annals of the South African Museum* Vol 24, part V.

78 1914.90.134 Bulwer was the governor of the Colony of Natal from 1875–1885.

79 28437 and 28448 Remenyi was a Hungarian violinist and composer who toured South Africa c 1886.

80 Af1954,+23.62 From the Welcome Museum.

81 Af,+.523.a-b and Af,+.525.b.

82 Nettleton, A. 1989. 'The crocodile does not leave the pool' *in African Art in Southern Africa: from Tradition to Township*. Johannesburg: AD Donker (Pty) Ltd. pp. 67–83.

83 Also known as Makhado.

84 Le Roux, M, 2009. 'Ngoma Lungundu: an African Ark of the Covenant', *Old Testament Essays,* 22/1, pp 102–125.

85 See Leibhammer, N., Burroughs, L and Nel, K., (forthcoming) *Jackson Hlungwani: Alt and Omega*.

86 Klopper, S and Nel, K., 2002, *The Art of Southeast Africa from the Conru Collection*, pp 108 and 200, No 50.

87 Magubane, P and Klopper, S. 2001. *The Bantwane: Africa's Undiscovered People.* Cape Town: Struik Publishers. pp 41–3.

88 Klopper, S., Nettleton, A., and Pethica, T., 2007. *The Art of Southern Africa*. Milan: Five Continents, p 70.

89 Magubane, P., and Klopper. S., 2001, pp 38–9.

90 See *The Art of Southeast Africa*, p 203.

91 Jacobson, L. 2006, 'Namibian decorated Ostrich Eggs Rediscovered' in *The Digging Stick*, Vol 23 (2). p 16.

92 Ibid pp 15–6.

93 See Morris, 2002.

94 Jacobson, L and Noli, D., 2018. 'New finds of engraved whole ostrich eggs from southern Namibia and the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.' *South African Humanities*, Vol 31 pp 55–61. KwaZulu-Natal Museum.

95 Ione and Jalmar Rudner, 1957, A. Sparrman's Ethnographical Collection from South Africa, *Statens Ethnorafiska Museum*, Nr 25. Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri.

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